‘Mindful Dis/engagement’:

Extending the Constitutive View of Organizational Paradox by Exploring Leaders’ Mindfulness, Discursive Consciousness, and More-Than Responses

by

Sophia Town

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Sarah J. Tracy, Chair
Gail Fairhurst
Elissa A. Adame
Boris Brummans
Don Lange

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore the way mindfulness informs how leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, based on synchronous, semi-structured, in-depth interviews of leaders who hold a personal mindfulness practice. Qualitative interviews illuminate how leaders' communication about paradoxical tensions (e.g., through metaphorical language) reflects the way they experience those tensions. Findings extend the constitutive approach to paradox by demonstrating the way mindfulness informs awareness, emotion, pausing, and self-care. Specifically, this study (1) empirically illustrates how higher-level, dialogic *more-than* responses to paradox may be used to accomplish *both-and* responses to paradox, (2) evidences the way discursive consciousness of emotion may generatively inform paradox management, (3) suggests the appropriateness and use of a new paradox management strategy that I term *'mindful dis/engagement'*, and (4) highlights self-care as an others-centered leadership capability.

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PREFACE

We live in a culture of *either-or* thinking. Female or Male. Child or adult. Smart or strong. Rich or poor. Kind or cruel. Forward or backward. Up or down. Them or us. You or me.

While these categories may feel natural to many of us, it is through our language that we construct boundaries and thus create a reality reflective of those boundaries (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), in what might otherwise be a boundless, expansive existence (Weick, 1995). Although our language does a good job at effectively simplifying amorphous concepts so that we can communicate about them, this same language limits our cognitive capacity to think beyond the traditional (i.e., practiced) modes of categorizing (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and to see creative alternatives or synergies. In order to embark on a journey to study the transcendence of *either-or* thinking, I had to overcome some *either-or* thinking, myself.

Two years ago, I began studying Buddhism in my private life. Around that same time, in my Ph.D. program, I was steeped in academic literature on leadership, sensemaking, and organizational communication. I noticed that much of my Buddhist studies (e.g., mindfulness) seemed to relate to my academic interests (e.g., sensemaking). For example, the sensemaking framework suggests we make sense of ourselves and our world based on our prior experience (Weick, 1995). With Buddhism, one of the goals is to release categories and look at the world with a beginner's mind (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). I wondered, "what would happen if Buddhist mindfulness philosophies were applied to

sensemaking practices?" It seemed that if a person could apply mindfulness to their sensemaking, they may be able to sense-make with more consciousness and awareness.

In the fall of 2017, I became utterly preoccupied with this idea. I was fascinated by what I was learning in both arenas of my life, and by their relatedness. At first, I didn't believe there was a way to integrate my two passions publicly. I thought I was required to choose between wearing *either* an academic hat *or* spiritual hat. As a third year Ph.D. student, I was concerned with presenting myself as an academic, so I generally kept my Buddhist studies to myself. However, as I learned more about mindfulness and sensemaking—namely the ways in which most of our conceptual categories are arbitrary and self-imposed—I began to ask myself (and then my peers and mentors), "What would happen if we applied mindfulness philosophy to academic theory?", "How might mindfulness inform the way people make sense of their experiences?", "How might mindfulness show up in leadership?", "How might mindfulness inform communication?", and then, finally, "How might mindfulness inform either/or thinking?"

This study addresses, at least to some extent, each of the above questions. This study also reflects my personal journey of overcoming *either-or* thinking in regard to spirituality and science. But mostly, this study aims to illuminate communication practices that transform and heal. To me, communication that transforms promotes reflexivity, creativity, and awareness. Communication that heals promotes dignity, wellbeing and connection. I believe leadership communication should do both.

On that note, *namaste.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Organizations are rife with paradoxes (Lewis & Smith, 2014). Paradoxes occur when necessary yet contradictory elements persist simultaneously over time and appear ironic or absurd (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018; Sheep, Fairhurst, & Khazanchi, 2017). For example, a paradox could manifest when a department must expand headcount while cutting costs, or when the leader must simultaneously control and delegate work tasks. Paradoxes show up in operational issues such as performance expectations (e.g., the need to achieve both creativity and productivity) (Chang & Birkett, 2004) or policy management (e.g., maternity leave that cannot be utilized) (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

Paradoxes are often viewed as "contradictory yet interrelated elements—elements that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously" (Lewis, 2000, p. 760). Sometimes, the tensions involved in paradoxes appear to cancel out each other, whereby accomplishing one will cause neglect of the other (Putnam et al., 2016). At other times, accomplishing either tension seems entirely impossible, given the contextual factors at play. Due to the complex nature of paradoxes, past research has argued that they tend to paralyze action and thus lead to problems involving organizational performance and employee wellbeing (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghardt, 2016).

Organizationally, paradoxes can cause power struggles, decoupling, and even gridlock (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014), resulting in the loss of resources and reputation (Smith & Lewis, 2011). For individual employees, paradoxes can encourage literalism

(i.e., lack of complex thinking), overthinking, paranoia, and withdrawal (Tracy, 2004). The inability to make sense of paradoxical tensions can cause employees to feel guilt, anxiety (Tracy, 2004), and eventual inertia (Putnam et al., 2016; Smith, 2014), resulting in decreased morale and burnout (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Curiously, when faced with paradoxical tensions, the way a person perceives the situation—either as paradoxical or as generative and synergistic—influences their ability to cope, manage, or even transcend it (Putnam et al., 2016; Tracy, 2004).

Fortunately, leaders can help. Due to their hierarchical status and ability to reach the organizational audience, leaders are in the unique position to communicatively reframe contradictions in productive ways (Gioia, 1986; Lavine 2014). By reframing paradoxes in productive ways, leaders may be able to diminish their problematic outcomes. Some leaders happen to manage paradoxes better at this than others (Lavine, 2014; Link, 2017). However, research involving how individual people experience and react to paradoxes is sparse and, at times, equivocal (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). The study of organizational paradox would valuably benefit from further research on individual approaches to paradox—something a communicative lens may be well suited for.

Putnam and colleagues (2016) recently proposed a *constitutive approach* to paradox that offers a useful perspective. From the constitutive view, paradoxes are constructed—and potentially deconstructed—through organizational communication. The current study aims to contribute to the constitutive view of paradox by exploring the way leaders can productively make sense of, and navigate, paradoxes that arise through their

communication and behavior. Given the goals of this project, I have chosen to focus on leaders who may be uniquely practiced in paradoxical thinking. One population that seems to do this well is people who practice *mindfulness* in the form of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and/or cognitive exercises (Langer, 1989).

Research suggests that people who formally practice mindfulness (e.g., meditation, contemplative exercises, mental activities) may perceive of contradictions in uniquely productive ways, and move through them accordingly (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999). As a key aspect of mindfulness practice, people learn to become comfortable with uncertainty and complexity (Capurso, Fabbro & Crescentini, 2014). As a result, people who practice mindfulness often learn to hold contradictory concepts in a generative tension (Wright, 2017), and create opportunities to observe possibilities that might have otherwise been obscured by prior sensemaking and default, socially-derived ways of perceiving (Shapiro, Carlson, Aston, & Freedman, 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). By examining the ways leaders who practice mindfulness make sense of and discursively navigate paradoxical tensions, this research aims to extend the current paradox management frameworks and provide a roadmap for future research and praxis.

Preview of Manuscript

This manuscript will unfold as follows: Chapter One opens with the rationale and purpose of this study. Chapter Two surveys salient paradox literature. I set up my theoretical framework by discussing how the following issues inform the current study: 1) the constitutive approach to paradox, 2) conceptual and definitional key term

distinctions, and 3) responses to paradoxical tensions. Chapter Three discusses the role of leadership in effective organizational paradox management. I explain how 1) the paradoxical leader and 2) the role of leaders' communication, with a particular emphasis on 3) ideographic metaphor, may provide valuable insight for my rationale and analysis. Chapter Four synthesizes relevant mindfulness literature through a lens of paradox and communication. I discuss how 1) Eastern and Western approaches to mindfulness and 2) mindful leadership align with and inform with the current study.

Chapter Five outlines methods and analysis. I discuss 1) sampling and recruitment, 2) interviews and 3) analysis procedures. Chapter Six delivers the study's findings in regard to *RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* This research question addresses the ways leaders come to understand the paradoxical tensions, including their individual experience of them. I explain how 1) both-and and more-than responses, 2) discursive consciousness of emotion, and 3) non-attachment are manifest. Chapter Seven delivers the study's findings in regard to *RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* This research question addresses the ways leaders take actions to diminish the paradoxical tensions through their communication and behavior. I explain how 1) an intentional pause and 2) self-care are used as paradox management strategies.

Chapter Eight discusses the study's theoretical and practical contributions, implications, limitations and future directions. I offer four key theoretical contributions: this study (1) empirically illustrates how higher-level, dialogic *more-than* responses to

paradox may be used to accomplish *both-and* responses to paradox, (2) evidences the way discursive consciousness of emotion may generatively inform paradox management, (3) suggests the appropriateness and use of a new paradox management strategy that I term *'mindful dis/engagement'*, and (4) highlights self-care as an others-centered leadership capability. I also offer two practical implications: (1) in response to complex problems, leaders could benefit from de-rationalizing problem-solving to incorporate emotion-based problem-navigating into their strategic repertoire, and (2) leaders could benefit from building *mindful dis/engagement* and self-care into their organizational protocol. I also discuss limitations and future directions.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINING THE PARADOX FRAMEWORK

The study of organizational paradox has increased dramatically over the past decade (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018; Lewis & Smith, 2014). Scholars in fields as diverse as organizational communication (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014; Tracy, 2004), management (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009), psychology (Good & Michel, 2013), health (Long, Hall, Bermbach, Jordan, & Patterson, 2008; O'Brien, Martin, Heyworth, & Meyer, 2008), and education (Connor & Ferri, 2007) have taken up this messy, complex subject. This rise in research (Lewis & Smith, 2014) reflects an increasingly global, fast-paced, and multiplex workforce that continues to put pressure on resources and provoke competing demands (Miron-Spektor et al., 2017).

Today, many human processes are being replaced by digital substitutes, local work is being outsourced, start-ups and social entrepreneurship are en vogue, and millennials are entering the workforce at an increasing rate (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012). As organizations make structural and processual changes to fit the changing times, new contradictions emerge which can influence organizational outcomes at micro and macro levels (Lewis & Smith, 2014).

For example, the millennial workforce values clear rules and structure (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), while simultaneously demanding flexible schedules, tasks, and working conditions (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Similarly, millennials tend to require extended training and onboarding (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010), but experience a more immediate expectation for promotion, as well as a higher frequency of turnover (Kaifi et

al., 2012). In both of the above examples, the seeming contradictions between structure and autonomy may create binds for managers and leaders (Putnam et al., 2016) who must navigate them relationally and financially (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). These values can lead to boundary ambiguity across work, home, and the larger community, potentially resulting in defensive mechanisms or power struggles (Putnam et al., 2016). Given this plethora of competing and developing tensions, it is increasingly important for leaders to make sense of, and navigate, paradoxical tensions in productive ways.

Fortunately, recent scholarly discussions suggest promising new domains for paradox research and praxis. Historically, the study of organizational paradox has focused on exploring large-scale organizational systems and processes (e.g, Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), actors' cognition (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), and meaning construction (Lüscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006; Poole, 2000). Although these approaches differ in their explanation of the construction of paradoxes, as well as their paradox management strategies, they are similar in that they generally locate the consequent paradoxes as external to the actor. More recently, scholars have begun to shift their focus toward the ways that organizational communication (e.g., casual conversation, stories, metaphor) informs and constitutes paradoxical tensions.

In their recent comprehensive literature review, Putnam and colleagues (2016) propose a *constitutive approach* to paradox, built from theoretical traditions that foreground social processes, such as social constructionism, postmodernism, structuration, and relational dialectics. The constitutive view takes a decidedly discursive

stance by highlighting the role of communication (Putnam et al., 2016). From this perspective, paradoxes are developmental and dynamic; they are constructed and deconstructed through ongoing organizational communication. Thus, the constitutive approach encourages researchers to analyze paradoxical tensions by exploring the way communication emerges in everyday practices and then constitutes or ameliorates paradoxes.

Putnam and colleagues' (2016) constitutive view "addresses what [the authors] see as a gap in the paradox literature, that is, investigating the origins of paradoxes, their formation, their development, and the ways that they become intermingled with organizational practices" (p. 13). This approach highlights the role of *discourse, developmental actions, socio-historical conditions, presence of multiples* and *praxis* in the development of paradox (discussed in detail in the following section).

In short, the constitutive approach is a burgeoning lens based on past research that explores the discursive elements to paradox (e.g., Fleming & Spicer, 2009; Fonner & Roloff, 2012; Sheep et al., 2017; Tracy, 2004). The constitutive approach welcomes a variety of theories, frameworks, methodologies—so long as they consider paradox communicatively. In this project, I aim to contribute to the constitutive view of paradox by incorporating mindfulness into the conversation to explore how leaders' mindfulness informs their communication about paradox.

In what follows, I outline various components to the constitutive approach to paradox, including *discourse, developmental actions, socio-historical conditions,*

presence of multiples and *praxis.* I provide a brief overview of each concept and discuss how they may inform my study.

The Constitutive Approach to Paradox

The constitutive approach to paradox, introduced by Putnam and colleagues (2016), is central to my theoretical framework. This approach pivots the focus away from cognition or large-scale systems (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Jarzabkowski, Le, & Van de Ven, 2013) toward discourse, social interactions, logics, and organizational activities. The constitutive approach argues for a process-oriented view rooted in communication (Putnam et al., 2016). Although cognitive and structural research may be useful for evidencing the problematic outcomes of organizational paradox, these perspectives ignore the power of communication to do much other than reflect reality (Putnam et al., 2016). From the traditional cognitive or structural lens, language is framed as a mere artifact.

A constitutive lens, on the other hand, "grounds tensions in routine patterns of organizing in which contradictions emerge, evolve, and become interwoven in ongoing struggles" (Putnam et al., 2106, p. 12). This perspective mirrors the constitutive view of organizing (McPhee & Zaug, 2009), and similarly elevates the role of talk for shaping organizational structures (Cooren & Martine, 2016, p. 2). This *bottom-up* view of organizing allows for an exploration of the way paradoxes evolve through actions and interactions over time. In other words, communication *about* paradox does more than reflect paradox—talk can also create or dissolve the paradox. From a constitutive view, paradox is a communication-based process.

However, the constitutive view does not presume that paradoxes are not manifest in organizational systems, or that cognition is irrelevant; instead, the constitutive view holds that people experience paradoxes communicatively, and that communication about paradoxes crosses individual, group, and organizational spheres (Putnam et al., 2016). From this view, language is a key function for how paradoxical tensions move and develop across organizational lines.

For example, employees may experience paradoxical tensions in conversations, memos, mission statements, meetings, norms, and expectations—and then respond to those tensions in their communication and behavior. Through organizational interactions at the micro level (e.g., everyday talk), macro paradoxes become reified and carried forth into future policies, structures, and expectations. Paradoxes—and the organizations from which they emerge—can be understood as "a set of micro-processes through which human actors engage in recurring sets of practices within the affordances of a material world" (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019). Here, the communicative and the material are braided together in a developmental interplay. Ongoing organizational dynamics emerge as past practices evolve and solidify into systemic and structural processes, procedures, and paradigms. Paradoxes emanate from social actions and interactions as organization members respond to and process contradictions in ways that create systematic patterns. These patterns become embedded in routines and structures, are brought from the past into the future, and evolve as organizing continues across time and space (Putnam et al., 2016).

Until the introduction of the constitutive approach, most literatures have primarily emphasized cognition and organizational systems. The constitutive view opens up a new set of questions for paradox researchers to consider, including "How can we think of language more complexly to understand paradox in organizations?" and "How do organizational actors construct stories about tension-filled experience?" and "How do these stories construct social realities about organizational paradoxes?" (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019). In other words, the constitutive view surfaces a communicative richness that underlies how paradoxes are made sense of, narrated, navigated, and socially experienced in organizational settings.

Given this interactive and discursive focus, the constitutive view is a useful lens for exploring the way that leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise through their communication and behavior. By examining the way these leaders talk *about* paradoxical tensions, I hope to discover the ways in which their communication reifies or softens those tensions. As a theoretical framework the constitutive approach is composed of five key elements (Putnam et al., 2016). In what follows, I describe each element and how they inform my study.

The first element of the constitutive approach, *discourse*, describes the "constellations of language, logics, and texts rooted in day-to-day actions and interactions" that constitute paradoxes (Putnam et al., p. 14). This focus on discourse suggests that the physical and material world is manifest through social and communicative processes (Putnam et al., 2016). Therefore, by studying the way leaders talk about paradoxical tensions through their words, metaphors, stories, etc., I will

empirically examine the way everyday discourse can create, sustain, or diminish paradoxes.

The second element, *developmental actions,* refers to the notion that paradoxes emerge, are sustained, and change, through present-moment experience. In other words, paradoxical tensions are constituted, reified, shared and dissolved through live action (Putnam et al., 2016). In the current study, by holding a developmental focus, I remain attuned to the ongoing ways that communication may shift people's perceptions of paradox at any given moment.

The third element, *socio-historical conditions,* is related to the developmental action component (Putnam et al., 2016). Although paradox-constituting discourse happens in the present moment, it is rooted in past interactions and it informs future interactions. In this sense, paradoxes are always contextual (Putnam et al., 2016). Thus, I will examine discourse through a lens of relationality that assumes the process is braided with memories and expectations. When exploring the way leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise, a focus on the socio-historical will allow me to draw conclusions about the past and make arguments about the future.

The fourth element, the *presence of multiples,* aims to challenge the assumption that paradoxes are always binary, and instead illuminates the multiplicity of tensions, levels, and voices that may be present in any given paradox (Putnam et al., 2016). From this perspective, paradoxes can become knotted and interwoven, as opposed to necessarily bifurcated and polar (Putnam et al., 2016). Given the multiplicity of facets at

play within any given paradox, I will address this study with an openness and expectation that multiple features may emerge.

The last element, *praxis*, provides scholars with the opportunity to explore productive paradox management from a uniquely communicative perspective. Praxis reflects actors' awareness of paradoxes, and their ability to put that awareness into words. Putnam and colleagues (2016) describe praxis as:

> [Consciousness that] emanates in felt experiences, self-monitoring of behavioral patterns, recognition of clashes in actions, and understanding the nature of tensions in an organizational field. It entails being reflexive about actions and interactions; analyzing and penetrating tensions-producing structures and experiences; and making choices to call into question, respond, and move forward amid contradictions and tensions. (p. 18)

A focus on praxis suggests that actors cultivate, develop, and enact a *discursive consciousness* in which they are able to describe what is happening in the unfolding of it, and then reflect on why it is happening (Giddens 1979; 1984). Organization members are encouraged to be *self-monitors* who practice communicative self-reflexivity of their experience when faced with paradoxical tensions (Putnam et al., 2016).

The notion of a discursive consciousness actually reflects a core component of mindfulness practice; namely, the ability to practice self-awareness (Vyner, 2019) and to label experiences as they arise (Baer et al., 2006). *However, there is currently no empirical investigation of discursive consciousness of paradox from a mindfulness perspective.* By exploring discursive consciousness aligned with mindfulness, this study

may provide a deeper understanding of how and why a discursive consciousness works to ameliorate organizational paradoxes. To empirically investigate discursive consciousness as a paradox management strategy, my study examines the ways leaders who practice mindfulness—and who, therefore, may be uniquely practiced in enacting a discursive consciousness—make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise.

In the above section, I discussed how the constitutive approach to paradox informs my theoretical framework. In the section to follow, I overview key paradox terms, including *tension, contradiction, dialectic, paradox,* and *paradoxical tension.*

Conceptual and Definitional Distinctions

In order to explore the way leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxes, it is important to briefly outline the most common ways of conceptualizing and defining paradoxical tensions. The paradox literature is rife with differences, inconsistencies, and conflation in vocabulary use (Putnam et al., 2016). In part, this may be because paradoxes may manifest—and be analyzed—as cognitive, environmental, and discursive constructions (Lewis & Smith, 2014; Sheep, Fairhurst, & Khazanchi, 2017; Smith & Lewis, 2011). Each lens may pose different questions and distinguish *paradox* in a slightly different way. Moreover, paradoxical phenomena can be difficult to describe, reflecting different levels of awareness on the part of organizational actors. Scholars may similarly struggle because across the paradox literature, terms like *tension, contradiction, dialectic,* and *paradox* are used broadly at times, and narrowly at other times.

For example, when describing a collective set of tensions that exist in a data set, it may be useful to refer to them more generally. To promote knowledge accumulation,

however, it is necessary to be as specific as possible. For the purposes of this study, I will provide an overview of key paradox terms, and I will explain the contexts in which I stress definitional precision, and the contexts in which I will use terms more broadly.

Tensions

The term *tension* is an umbrella term that refers to "stress-inducing oppositions" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018, p. 1). Tensions connote feeling states that can arise from the frustration of facing an opposition (Lewis, 2000; Putnam et al., 2016). For example, the leader of a nonprofit organization may feel pushed and pulled between running their business and providing humanitarian value (Sharma & Bansal, 2017). This double bottom line, requiring performance toward both financial and social goals (Margolis, Elfenbein, & Walsh, 2009), may elicit feelings of angst and uncertainty, and therefore create a tension (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Organization members experience tensions in visceral and tactile ways; leaders and employees feel, see, think and talk about tensions as they individually and collectively experience them (Putnam et al., 2016). Tensions are unpleasant because they cause anxiety, contraction, stuckness, and, at times, even paralysis (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014). When faced with an opposition, the way a person perceives of it will determine whether he or she experiences a paralyzing tension, or finds a creative solution to the problem (Tracy, 2004). Although tensions can be assumed in the presence of demonstrative emotional markers, "the sensory experience of paradox may be hard to describe, and [may] lack emotional markers" (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019). Thus, the current study introduces the notion of mindfulness to the

exploration of paradoxical tensions. Mindfulness, characterized by the practice of recognizing and verbally labeling one's emotions (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006), may inform our theoretical understanding of how tensions are experienced and verbalized.

The term *tension,* which can be used to encompass any of the other concepts, is the broadest term used to describe oppositions. Tensions, as feeling states, may also co-occur with the other concepts outlined below. I use the term *tension* to describe these feeling states that emerge. I also use the term *tension* as the compound term, *paradoxical tension* (described below)*,* to refer to any experience in which a person feels conflicted by two or more goals or values that appear to compete with one another.

Contradictions

The term *contradiction* refers to "interdependent oppositions that potentially negate each other" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018, p. 2). When viewed as a contradiction, paradoxical tensions are considered mutually exclusive (Smith & Lewis, 2011), interdependent (Putnam et al., 2016), and "diametrically opposed" (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 8, 2019). Not only do contradictions define each other, but they can also cancel each other out. For example, if a leader believes *control* is a finite resource, she may fear that her followers' *autonomy* would negate her control (Mallinger, 1998). This *either-or*, you-versus-me mentality suggests employees' goals are incongruent with the organization's goals. From this frame, one goal will succeed as the other fails.

The tendency to view tensions as contradictions stems from dualistic thinking, and language may be partially to blame (Putnam et al., 2016). Through metaphorical language, binary thinking can become undercurrent to everyday meaning making (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Language often frames experience as bounded within certain parameters and perimeters and "casts polar opposites as mutually exclusive and interdependent rather than discrete" and co-occurring (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 10). For example, metaphorical language that positions *up-versus-down*, *you-versus-me*, and *good-versus-bad* promulgates dualistic sensemaking, even if material reality does not reflect these dichotomies. When I use the term *contradiction,* I am describing discursive and/or material tensions that appear, to the actor, as mutually exclusive and interdependent.

Dialectics

The term *dialectic* refers to "negating oppositions with an ongoing dynamic interplay" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018, p. 2). Within organizational scholarship, dialectics are most often conceptualized through Hegel's (1969) framework of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Dialectics define each other insomuch as without one, the other would not exist (e.g., an understanding of *spontaneity* requires an understanding of *consistency*). If opposing forces are viewed as dialectical, they are not seen to negate each other, per se, but rather to exist as a push-pull dynamic (Putnam et al., 2016) in which both poles are valuable and necessary (Tracy, 2004). Thus, there can be an ongoing or evolutionary quality to dialectical dynamics (Bakhtin, 1981; 1986).

For example, in a study of correctional officers (Tracy, 2004)—a group who deals regularly with issues of withdrawal and burnout—the officers faced tensions inherent in their organizational rules and structures. These employees were required to demonstrate both respect and suspicion towards the inmates. The officers were also required to simultaneously exhibit nurture and discipline. When faced with these tensions, the officers' perception of how the tensions related to one another made a significant difference in their ability to cope and problem-solve. When the officers viewed the tensions as dialectics, they found productive ways to manage them. For example, by framing respect toward inmates as a way to peacefully accomplish scrutiny, the opposing poles of *respect* and *suspicion* actually worked together in cohesion (Tracy, 2004).

Dialectics are useful for paradox research because they remind scholars of the processual "ongoingness" of tensions (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 8, 2019). If I use the term *dialectic,* I am describing tensions that appear, to the actor, as existing in an "ongoing dynamic interplay" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018).

Paradoxes

When used to describe an entire body of literature on oppositions, the term *paradox* can be used as an inclusive term for *tension, contradiction, dialectic,* and *paradox* (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 8, 2019). More specifically, however, *paradox* refers to "persistent oppositions that often result in an ironic or absurd outcome" and impossible choice (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2018, p. 2). Using the more specific conceptualization, perceiving tensions as *paradoxes* is ultimately the most

constraining view. When responding to paradoxical demands, organizational actors may feel "damned if you do, damned if you don't."

Paradoxes create "situations of almost impossible choice, hence the seeming irrationality or absurdity of the situation" (Putnam et al., 2016). For example, the mandate, "be spontaneous" may appear paradoxical (Tracy, 2004) because "if one plans to be spontaneous, then one cannot by definition be spontaneous. On the other hand, if the mandate is disobeyed, it is paradoxically obeyed, because refusing to comply with the mandate 'be spontaneous' is spontaneous" (p. 122). Because of the constraining and absurd nature of paradoxes, they tend to cause anxiety (Tracy, 2004) and hamper creativity (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011). For example, when correctional officers viewed oppositions as paradoxical, they often withdrew, resorted to literalism (i.e., simplistic thinking), or even became paranoid (Tracy, 2004). Thus, paradoxes often result in surprising, ironic, or inconsistent outcomes (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014) that fail to move the organization forward in a productive manner (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008).

When I use the term *paradox,* I am doing one of two things. I am either describing the paradox literature writ large, which I will make apparent, or I am referring to tensions that appear, to the actor, as persistent and absurd, and which create "situations of almost impossible choice" (Putnam et al., 2016).

Paradoxical Tensions

When discussing a collective set of tensions that variously include tensions, contradictions, dialectics, or paradox, I will follow the precedent in the literature and

refer to them collectively as *paradoxical tensions* (Putnam et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016).

In the above section, I outlined key paradoxical terms, and described the ways in which I use them in the current study. In the section to follow, I provide an overview of the various approaches to responding to paradoxical tensions that arise, including the *either-or, both-and,* and *more-than* approach. One of the primary purposes of this research is to contribute to Fairhurst & Putnam's (2018) framework by empirically investigating the *both-and* approach, as well as their newly introduced *more-than* approach.

Responses to Paradoxical Tensions

In their literature review, Putnam and colleagues (2016) categorized and synthesized three primary approaches to responding to paradoxical tensions: *either-or*, *both-and*, and *more-than*. Similarly to the variety of ways in which a person may perceive paradoxical tensions, people may respond to the paradoxical tensions in more or less productive manners.

'Either-Or' Responses

Either-or responses are the simplest approach. Here, actors treat the paradoxical tensions as contradictory, and only accomplish one goal at a time (Lewis, 2000). The *either-or* response is a common choice when facing deadlines, constraints, and pressure (Putnam et al., 2016). However, this approach is not very productive. *Either-or* responding is often accomplished through defensive reactions, selecting one tension over the other, or separating the tensions (Putnam et al., 2016). For example, a leader might

ignore the tension altogether, privilege one tension over the other, or divide up the labor so that different people or teams tackle opposing issues. Examples of this method include correctional officers playing *good cop* and *bad cop* (Tracy, 2004).

The problem with this method is that it can lead to power imbalances, decoupling (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014), and an overall decrease in morale (Smith & Lewis, 2011). Over time, *either-or* problem solving can lead to decreased "organizational vitality" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 59). For this reason, my goal is to explore responses that go beyond *either-or* and move toward *both-and* and *more-than*, discussed in detail below.

'Both-and' Responses

When leaders take a *both-and* approach, they will try to find a solution that allows for both, or all, of the tensions to be accomplished simultaneously. The *both-and* approach is more time consuming, yet also more productive than the *either-or* approach (Putnam et al., 2006; Tracy, 2004). *Both-and* responses involve mental processes and actions that work to increase cognitive capabilities (Link, 2007), expose underlying tensions, and promote comfortability with contradictions (Putnam et al., 2017). The *both-and* response comprises three categories of action: 1) paradoxical thinking, 2) vacillation or spiraling inversion, and 3) integration and balance. These categories can reflect possible lenses, responses, and/or outcomes.

Paradoxical thinking. Paradoxical thinking describes leaders' "increasing cognitive abilities to recognize opposites, question and reflect on them, and shift mental states" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 60). Paradoxical thinking may take place after a simple shift of awareness (Lusher & Lewis, 2008). In the case of an organizational restructuring

at Lego (Lusher & Lewis, 2008), middle managers felt paralyzed and unable to make sense of their new roles. The managers needed their director to create a common agenda for team meetings, while simultaneously addressing each manager's individual needs. By "shifting the notion of paradox from a *label* to a *lens* [emphasis added]," managers were able to "consider other perspectives, alter their assumptions, and explore issues in fundamentally different ways" (p. 234). The managers eventually realized that the two seemingly incompatible goals were fundamentally linked: high performing teams that work together can also meet individual needs. Thus, the team determined that they would work together to provide their director with better information prior to team meetings, so that the meetings could accomplish both aims.

By viewing paradox as a *lens* instead of an outcome, the managers were able to realize that the paradoxical tensions could be reconciled. In doing so, these leaders moved past linear problem solving toward more abstract ideas (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). They essentially accepted the situation for what was, in order to deal with it fully. In the end, this acceptance was key. This acceptance is a different kind of acceptance than the typical understanding (e.g., submission, surrender, avoidance). When faced with a paradox, "acceptance denotes a new understanding of inconsistencies, conflict, and ambiguity as natural working conditions" (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). For the managers at Lego, acceptance led to empowerment. This focus on acceptance aligns with mindfulness philosophy (Brach, 2003). Therefore, it may be valuable to explore paradoxical thinking, and acceptance, from a mindfulness lens. The researchers of the Lego study also noted the importance of communication for making sense of paradoxical tensions by

identifying interwoven communication patterns that underpinned organizational paradoxes, including recursive cycles, systemic contradictions, and mixed messages. The current study builds from prior work by exploring *both-and* responses, including paradoxical thinking, from a communication-centric and mindfulness-based lens (described in detail in the next chapter).

Vacillation or spiraling inversion. Vacillation describes a process of shifting—perhaps rapidly, perhaps methodically—back and forth between two or more poles (Putnam et al., 2016). For example, leaders may vacillate between exploration and exploitation depending on the organizational environment and needs. Or, a leader may vacillate between sharing and maintaining control of work tasks, depending on the level of crisis or calmness the organization is experiencing. A spiraling inversion is essentially an ongoing vacillation across both or all tensions. Vacillation and spiraling inversion can be a useful *both-and* strategy, so long as they do not devolve into *either-or* segmentation. In this study, I include vacillation/spiraling inversion as part of my framework for exploring *both-and* responses.

Integration and balance. Integration and balance deal with finding a compromise or equilibrium (Putnam et al., 2016). Here, leaders look for a *middle-of-the-road* solution to accomplish both or all tensions simultaneously. Putnam and colleagues (2016) suggest, for example, that integration and balance could manifest as the cultivation of hybrid work environments amidst extended maternity leave (Buzzanell & Liu, 2005). However, they warn that integration and balance are products of steady

organizational environments, and might "no longer parallel fast-paced, dynamic organizations" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 64).

Given that mindfulness practice often encourages people to interrogate the standard pace at which Western society tends to operate (Brach, 2003; Hahn, 2017), it may be useful to consider integration and balance alongside a mindfulness perspective. In this study, I include integration and balance as part of my framework for exploring if leaders address paradoxical tensions from a *both-and* approach. As an extension of the *both-and* framework described above, Putnam et al. (2016) recently proposed a higher-level set of responses. The authors call this the *more-than* approach.

'More-than' Responses

In a complement to their foundational literature synthesis, the *more-than* categorization is Putnam and colleagues' (2016) novel contribution to the organizational paradox literature. When compared to the *both-and* framework, the *more-than* approach involves higher-level responses that are, broadly speaking, dialogic in nature (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019). The *more-than* approach shifts how energy is derived when responding to paradoxical tensions; practices involving dialogue, reflexivity, and "speaking the awareness" may move actors beyond the non-dialogic processes evidenced in the *both-and* approach, and thus lead to more fruitful outcomes (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019).

More-than responses create a "novel, creative synergy" between oppositions in which the outcome of combining tensions may prove more useful than either in isolation (p. 64). In other words, with the *more-than* approach, the whole may be more than the

sum of its parts. The *more-than* approach is composed of: 1) reframing and transcendence, 2) connection, third spaces, and dialogue, and 3) reflexive practice and serious playfulness. Similar to the *both-and* responses discussed above, the following categories may reflect an actor's lens, response, or outcome in regard to paradoxical tensions.

Reframing and transcendence. Reframing "occurs when parties situate opposites in a new reformulated whole or a novel relationship so that the poles are no longer pitted against each other" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 64). Through reframing, leaders transform what the paradoxical tensions can mean and become. For example, there is a common bifurcation in healthcare between "secular, hierarchical models of organizing" and human spirituality (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006). This is even the case in traditionally Catholic hospitals. One such hospital, facing challenging environmental, economic, and employee morale issues, underwent an organizational transformation in the year 2000. Over the years, the hospital had moved away from its spiritual roots toward a toxic corporate model. Eventually, the organization's CEO "sought a new model of organizing to counter the controlling, oppressive, and uninspiring models of the past and embrace a 'new vision' of what could be" (p. 61).

Although leadership aimed to transition from the corporate model toward a spiritual model, they recognized that the hospital still operated within an existing corporate economy. Therefore, instead of relying on traditional Catholic frames or secular corporate frames, the leadership took up a new mode of spirituality, grounded in *love*:

> All but two participants conceiv[ed] of spirituality as broader and more inclusive than religion. Employees defined spirituality globally as love, wholeness, and purpose and saw a spiritual workplace as one guided by values of honesty, sacred communication, fairness, excellence, and celebration. (p. 52).

This focus on spirituality, instead of religion, manifested in organizational discourse. Terms like *passion*, *joy*, *love*, *energy*, and *soul* permeated the new lexicon (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006). New metaphors were used in meetings. Leadership and employees reminded each other to use love-oriented phrases such as ‘‘inspire them to do the right thing,” in place of destructive metaphors like “get in there and fight” (p. 55). Employees learned to end phone calls, meetings, and emails with the word *namaste*, a Sanskrit term that essentially means *the light in me sees the light in you.*

This new and modern approach to spirituality, which transcended religion specifically, allowed the hospital to challenge the corporate model while also moving beyond archaic spiritual traditions (Goodier & Eisenberg, 2006). Here, boundaries dissolved, concepts were rearticulated, and relationships were reconsidered. The CEO and employees were able to *reframe* the paradoxical tensions through their communication.

Similarly to *reframing*, *transcendence* occurs when paradoxical tensions are positioned “in a novel relationship to each other by moving outside of a paradoxical system to a new level of meaning or by expanding the boundaries of an organization’s context” (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 65). For example, in a study of virtual teams (Gibbs, 2009) managers and foreign employees faced the paradoxical tensions of detachment and

involvement. When perceived as paradoxes, withdrawal ensued. However, when viewed as dialectics, tensions were transcended and creative strategies "that enabled [managers] to balance competing demands and broker relationships" were formed (p. 929). Certain managers "walked the line" by "build[ing] ambiguity into the reporting structure through their discourse, by simultaneously encouraging assignees to come to them with problems while distancing themselves through claims that they did not have time to maintain close involvement with them" (p. 919).

In this same study, transcendence was also achieved through discursive reframing. Several managers dealt with the ongoing tension of needing to both include and exclude contract employees from regular meetings. On one hand, organizational policy required *communication meetings* to be reserved for permanent employees. On the other hand, contract employees were becoming an integral part of the organization, and their participation mattered. One manager transcended this paradoxical tension by renaming the meetings from *communication meetings* to *status meetings*. This discursive reframing bypassed the tension by allowing contract employees to participate in regular update meetings without disrupting organizational policy. By conceptually redefining these meetings, organization members experienced them in new ways that circumvented the past contradiction. Given the communicative nature of reframing, I will use reframing and transcendence as part of my framework for exploring if and how leaders who practice mindfulness approach paradoxical tensions from a *more-than* response.

Connection, third spaces, and dialogue. Connection, third spaces, and dialogue reflect a process of interaction that aims to promote stakeholder communication (Putnam

et al., 2016). The first component, *connection,* holds tensions together in a dynamic interplay. For example, Putnam et al. (2016) point to a study of maternity leave (Liu & Buzzanell, 2004), in which the ongoing interaction of tensions—instead of selecting one tension of the other—kept the tensions in *connection.* The goal of connection is to create *third spaces.* Third spaces are liminal time-bound contexts—symbolic and/or physical—to discuss the tensions. In a study of a utility company merger, a third space was reflected in the new context created by the merger (Howard & Geist, 1995).

Dialogue reflects "communicative practices that seek energy from tensions" in which "stakeholders treat opposite poles as equally valued and form co-developed meanings among people, situations, and events" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 65). For example, dialogue may manifest in interventions or learning sessions. Much like reframing, the communicative focus here lends well to the exploration of the way leaders who practice mindfulness make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions through their communication and behavior.

Reflexive practice and serious playfulness. The final component to the *more-than* approach, reflexive practice and serious playfulness, highlights actors' awareness of the tensions and of themselves (Putnam et al., 2016). Here, praxis is "a way of holding opposite poles together through becoming aware of dualities, [and] using tensions for self and relational reflexivity" (p. 66). *Reflexive practice* can be seen, for example, in a study of "good management practice" in which Huxham and Beech (2003) engaged in dialogue that investigated "apparently contradictory pieces of good management advice" (p. 69).

By verbally unpacking the tensions, the authors were able to develop a practice-oriented theory that highlighted the role of reflexive discourse.

Serious playfulness is a practice that highlights emotional responses to paradox—as opposed to the more traditional rational approach. For example, actors may use irony or humor to shine light on paradoxical tensions, as in a study of women who used humor to negotiate paradoxes of organizational identity, structure, and power (Martin, 2004). Serious playfulness "engage[s] contradictions by adhering to and disrupting the rules, playing with multiple meanings, and challenging normal boundaries" (Putnam et al., p. 66).

Curiously, one of the core tenets of mindfulness practice is to explore and expand emotional self-awareness by considering multiple meanings and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about reality and our human responses to it (Kornfield, 2008). Therefore, a mindfulness-based lens to the study of reflexive practice and serious playfulness may offer an amplified empirical exemplar of these processes. In the next chapter, I discuss mindfulness in detail.

To sum up, the *more-than* approach to paradox may be achieved by discursively reframing of tensions, creating spaces for stakeholders to participate in constructive dialogue, and engaging in reflexive practice of the tensions and of the self (Putnam et al., 2016). The *more-than* response embraces the presence of tensions in order to transcend them. Thus, the *more-than* approach is one in which actors avoid closing off options prematurely.

Mindfulness, as I will explain the next chapter, also avoids premature closure of options by allowing for uncertainty and ambiguity (Carson & Langer, 2006). As I explore the way mindfulness informs how leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxical organizational tensions, I will hold the *more-than* approach to paradox as a key construct in my theoretical framework. While Putnam et al. (2016) conceptually map out the *more-than* approach, few empirical explorations have held the *more-than* approach as a theoretical lens from the beginning of study design. The current study uses the above sensitizing concepts to contribute to the *more-than* framework.

So far, I have provided an overview of paradox literature, a description of key terms, a discussion of the constitutive view, and a discussion of different approaches to responding to paradoxes. In doing so, I have drawn heavily from Putnam and colleagues' (2016) comprehensive literature review, which is foundational to this current study. In the next section, I describe another topic central to my theoretical framework: the ways in which leadership and leaders' communication—focusing on their use of metaphor—may inform paradox management.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

Due to the costly, constraining, and at times paralyzing effect of organizational paradox, it is imperative to identify practices that promote effective paradox management and create possibilities for action. Leaders are in a unique position to guide employees through paradox management strategies and mitigate the negative individual and organizational outcomes associated with unsuccessful paradox management (e.g., decreased employee morale; reputation). Leaders' influence comes from their hierarchical status and thus their ability to craft messages that reach the organizational audience (Gioia, 1986). This unique position allows leaders to shape employees' perceptions and outcomes by framing situations in productive ways (Fairhurst, 2007; 2010), especially in the face of change, uncertainty, or confusion (Barge, 2014)—states which often accompany paradox (Smith, 2014). Effective leaders create contexts purposefully, thereby giving sense to situations instead of leaving employees' perceptions up to automatic sensemaking (Fiss & Zajac, 2006) and therefore vulnerable to negative outcomes.

Although scholars recognize the importance of leaders' influence on successful paradox management (Lavine, 2014), research on the link between leadership and paradox is still in its early stages (Link, 2017). In fact, the term *paradoxical leadership*, only recently entered the management literature (Lewis, Andriopoulos & Smith 2014). *Paradoxical leadership* refers to a particular approach to leadership in which leaders invite and even embrace paradox by holding competing goals in a balanced tension with

one another (Lavine, 2014). Often, each of these goals underpins organizational efficacy, making it impossible to drop either—yet seemingly irrational to adopt both (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Complex webs of choices and actions require paradoxical leaders to shift their behaviors, and even their leadership styles, per the specific context (Lavine, 2014). This fluidity challenges the dominant models of leadership which emphasize rationality and consistency (Yukl, 2013). Paradoxical leadership, on the other hand, illuminates the messiness and absurdity necessary to move through complex and at times knotted situations (Sheep, Fairhurst & Khazanchi, 2017). To that end, paradoxical leadership may inform a "new language of change" (Eisenhardt, 2000, p. 703). In order to speak this language, leaders must be skilled in responding to contradictions that arise.

Defining the 'Paradoxical Leader'

Research suggests the most effective leaders are those who are able to think and behave paradoxically (Lavine, 2014; Smith et al., 2016). These are leaders who "manage to act soft and hard, flexibly and with stability, creatively and under control, quickly and methodically; they are relational and independent, precise and groundbreaking. They are, in a word, paradoxical" (Lavine, 2014, p. 7). These leaders are better able to manage paradoxes that arise, because they develop the ability to "hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function" (Denison, Hooijberg & Quinn, 1995, p. 526). By holding paradoxical tensions in this way, leaders are able to comprehend interconnectedness and investigate potentiality (Miron-Spektor et al.,

2011)—these are useful capacities when considered alongside the *both-and* and *more-than* response patterns.

Although we know paradoxical leadership is important for productive paradox management (Link, 2017), opportunity remains to research the ways leaders can effectively make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions through their communication and behavior. Recently, there have been calls for scholars and practitioners to "deeply incorporate a paradox perspective" into the study and practice of leadership (Lavine, 2014, p. 190). To integrate leadership into paradox theory, Link (2017) proposes a framework of paradoxical leadership that deals with leaders' *cognition*, *behavior*, and *emotion*. Link's model, which draws from vast paradox literature, claims a leader's cognition, behavior, and emotion influence his or her ability to effectively navigate organizational paradoxes.

According to Link (2017), *cognitive complexity,* the ability to hold two or more contradictions in the mind without being cognitive overburdened by them, has been observed by numerous scholars in the investigation of paradox (e.g., Weick, 1979; Kiesler & Sproull, 1982; Bartunek, Gordon & Weathersby, 1983; Streufert & Swezey, 1986). Similarly, *behavioral complexity,* the ability to enact contradictory behaviors while preserving one's authenticity and identity, has been studied extensively (Goffee & Jones, 2005; Lavine, 2014, p. 7).

However, the study of *emotion* has been fairly sparse in organizational paradox research in general (Fairhurst, Smith, Banghart, Lewis, & Putnam, 2016), and paradoxical leadership research in particular (Link, 2017). This may be due to the fact

that past paradox research has, historically, prioritized *rationality* over *emotion*, and thus overlooked the way emotion may inform paradox management (Fairhurst et al., 2016). Furthermore, *individual approaches* to paradox—including the role of emotion—may be more difficult to measure than observable phenomena, such as *types* or *outcomes* (Schad, Lewis, Raisch, & Smith, 2016). This may be because people often struggle to explain their experiences coherently, particularly in the context of messy, multiplex problems. If a person is asked to describe how they, individually, approached a paradoxical tension, they may conflate their approach to the tension with their perception of it, or they might describe the tension in varying ways, shifting between conceptualizations of dialectics, paradoxes, dualities, contradictions, etc. (G. Fairhurst, personal communication, March 7, 2019). Compared to the complexity of people's ephemeral emotional responses, it may be simpler and more organized to explore and measure the observable phenomena of paradoxes (e.g., types, outcomes, organizational processes). By exploring *types*, for example, paradoxes are treated as external entities that can me managed. Paradigmatically, framing paradox as entities allows scholars to predict, control, and measure them—but leaves room for exploring the intricate dynamics of individual responses and sensemaking. Thus, the study of emotion in paradox and paradoxical leadership research is ripe for exploration.

Emotional complexity is an individual's capacity to navigate his or her own, as well as others', emotional states—particularly in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty (Link, 2017). In the face of paradox, negative emotional responses often include defensiveness (Lewis & Smith, 2014), withdrawal, paranoia (Tracy, 2004), ambivalence

(Smith & Berg, 1987), and confusion (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), which together fuel anxiety and can lead to organizational paralysis. However, it is also possible to respond to seeming contradictions through humor (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2016), curiosity (Putnam et al., 2016), and acceptance (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008), which reduce emotional anxiety and leave room for better problem-solving. Because leaders often transfer their sensemaking to their followers (Gioia, 1986), emotional complexity may be vital for a leaders' success in navigating and communicating about paradox.

Although Link's model does not specifically capture a communication component of paradox management, it provides a foundation upon which communication research may further explore emotion by studying leaders' discourse (Fairhurst, 2007). Putnam and colleagues (2016) also called for future exploration of the role of emotion in paradox management. The authors suggest paradox researchers should untether themselves from the traditional focus on rationality and begin to explore the way emotion informs responses to paradox. The constitutive approach, which prioritizes communication, sets the stage for a study of leaders' communication in regard to paradox and emotionality. The current study aims to continue these conversations by remaining attuned to the potential role of emotion when exploring the way leaders who practice mindfulness make sense of and navigate paradoxical organizational tensions. To this end, exploring the language leaders use when reflecting upon their emotions in response to paradox may be particularly worthwhile.

The Role of Leaders' Communication

In organizations, leaders construct definitions of reality via *scripts* that serve as vehicles for understanding and action (Gioia, 1986). Through these symbols and scripts (e.g., metaphors, narratives, etc.), employees determine the meanings of their own experiences (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2007). Scripts also influence the way employees act into the future (Weick, 1995). While each organization member can contribute to creating scripts, leaders are in a particularly powerful position to do so (Fiss & Zajac, 2006) due to their ability to spread messaging across an organizational audience (Barge, 2014). Therefore, researchers can valuably examine the ways that leaders communicate about paradox.

From a pragmatic standpoint, although research demonstrates that paradoxical leadership is vital for paradox management, scholars can valuably investigate how leaders can accomplish and disseminate "a paradoxical strategy embedded with inconsistencies to subordinates who strive for consistency" (Smith, 2014, p. 1618). By focusing on discursive elements, we may gain insight into how leaders' communication informs their ability to accomplish and disseminate paradoxical strategies in this way.

Pioneered in the organizational communication field (Fairhurst, 2007), a *discursive leadership* lens challenges the psychological view of leadership and instead highlights the way communication is constitutive of leadership (Fairhurst & Connaughton, 2014). From a discursive lens, communication is not something that exists within leadership contexts; it *creates* leadership contexts (Barge, 2014; Fairhurst, 2007; 2010). Through message framing, (Fairhurst, 2010) leaders can create and shape contexts

for a situation and therefore powerfully influence the organizational reality of that situation. Barge (2014) portrayed this concept well in his autoethnographic account of taking the position of department head after the death of the current head. Barge described his leadership as emerging and existing in the continued, constantly evolving conversations within and outside of his department. From this lens, the way a leader talks *about* a situation *creates* the situation.

Although the discursive view argues that leadership emerges in the talk between people, instead of within the minds or personalities of the leader, the discursive lens does not deny the psychological view in its entirety; they can exist in tandem (Fairhurst, 2007). The discursive view simply provides a lens through which to ask different questions (Deetz, 2000). Fairhurst (2007) asks her readers to consider what new questions can be asked of leadership if we take a discursive approach, and what can be learned by putting discursive leadership and the psychological view of leadership in conversation with one another. By allowing both approaches to co-exist, scholars may be able to re-engage traditional leadership literature from a process-oriented perspective (Fairhurst, 2007).

The discursive view of leadership, which aligns conceptually and theoretically with the constitutive approach to paradox, reminds researchers of the active practice communication plays in leadership contexts. Because communication can create contexts, it is useful to examine the communication that precedes, exists within, and reflects upon those contexts. Specifically, because leaders' language will inform their ability to enact *both-and* and *more-than* responses to paradox management, it is useful to explore the ways in which leaders reflect upon and describe paradoxical organizational tensions. One

of the ways to explore leaders' discourse regarding paradoxical tensions is to focus on the metaphors they use to describe the tensions. In the next section, I discuss the value of metaphor analysis for the study of leaders' organizational paradox management.

Idiographic Metaphor as an Analytic Tool

Metaphors are words or phrases that compare or conceptualize one concept in terms of another, e.g., analogizing *argument* to *war* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors are embedded in daily text and talk, often preconsciously so (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016). Some scholars argue that humans actually think in metaphor by conceptualizing abstractions that arise in the mind in terms of their relation to physical things that can be seen, felt, and touched in the world (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). For example, by correlating *happy* (abstraction) with *up* (physical representation) and *sad* (abstraction) with *down* (physical representation), people often make sense of their emotional experiences on a physical linear spectrum. These preconscious *conceptual metaphors* are often ubiquitous within language-sharing cultures and therefore reflect widespread societal sensemaking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphors can be observed in language through an *idiographic* (i.e., emergent) manner, or through a *forced* metaphor approach. Where a forced approach asks participants to come up with a metaphor on the spot, e.g., "What does bullying feel like?" (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik & Alberts, 2006), an *idiographic* approach "identifies and analyzes metaphors that emerge naturally in people's talk" (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016, p. 240). Here, researchers avoid prompting participants for metaphors, but instead approach the interview data with an "eye toward metaphors in use" (p. 240).

Idiographic metaphors can make use of conceptual metaphors (e.g., up versus down) while simultaneously offering insights into a unique person, group, or research sample (e.g., a group of people who espouse the motto, "you have to slow down to speed up"). When paired with a discursive leadership lens, idiographic metaphor is a valuable tool for exploring how leaders make sense of paradoxes. This is because paradoxes are often replete with uncertainty and anxiety, and people are often "unable to narrate coherent plots, scripts, scenarios, recipes, and morals" amidst emotional turbulence (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016, p. 239). In instances like this, ideographic metaphors may shine light on the way people make sense of paradoxical tensions, even if the person is not able to report their experience by way of typical explanation or description.

Furthermore, because metaphors are able to reflect complex experience, they may act as scripts (Gioia, 1986) that give sense to experiences for the larger organization. In this way, leaders may use metaphors to constitute organizational realities—including experiences of paradox—for themselves and other members of the organization. Thus, ideographic metaphor analysis aligns, conceptually and theoretically, with the constitutive approach to paradox. Taken together, the constitutive approach to paradox (Putnam et al., 2016), discursive leadership (Fairhurst 2007), and ideographic metaphor analysis (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016) lay the foundational framework for the current study. In the next chapter, I discuss how my final theoretical framework, mindfulness, also meaningfully informs the study.

CHAPTER 4

MINDFULNESS & PARADOX

The practice of mindfulness is, in and of itself, replete with paradox. In meditation circles, it is often joked that, "You are perfect just as you are. And, there is always room for improvement." When learning to meditate for the first time, novice practitioners are taught that letting go of their desire to succeed will help them succeed (Wright, 2017). They are also taught that letting go is both the path to success and the outcome of success. On top of all of this, novice practitioners are often instructed to avoid thinking in the binary terms of success and failure. Thus, the entire process for learning about mindfulness is braided with paradoxes, mind twisters, and the familiar chicken-and-egg scenario.

Due to the paradoxical ways mindfulness is taught, alongside the repetitive practice of focusing on the present-moment and releasing judgments and labels, mindfulness practice has been shown to encourage a malleability of mind that fares well when faced with conceptual paradoxes. One common mindfulness exercise is to employ a *beginner's mind.* This practice involves approaching all things—from people to thoughts to objects—as if experiencing them for the very first time. A beginner's mind encourages people to bracket preconceived notions for how the world works in order to see novel relationships (Kornfield, 2008). Furthermore, people who practice mindfulness through meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994) and/or cognitive exercises (Langer, 2000) may be uniquely comfortable with nondualistic thinking, and thus retain the ability to hold contradictions in the mind in order to see novel connections (Capurso, Fabbro, &

Crescentini, 2014). Past work in the fields of psychology (Capurso, Fabbro, & Crescentini, 2014; Kornfield, 2008) and management (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Weick et al., 1999) demonstrate the way mindfulness promotes paradoxical thinking theoretically and empirically.

For example, in a study of bandwagon behavior, researchers showed how mindfulness informed if/when decision-makers resisted or followed the crowd (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003). The authors argue that people usually operate from a place of mind*less*ness. Mindlessness involves reacting to life on automatic pilot. Mindlessness is a mode of functioning characterized by reduced attention, and "emotionally rigid, rule-based behaviors" (p. 58). Unfortunately, this is the norm (Langer, 1989). When people are mindless, and "trapped in previously created categories, these individuals easily confuse the stability of their assumptions with stability in the world, thus giving themselves a false reading on their surroundings" (Fiol & O'Connor, 2003, p. 58).

On the other hand, the authors demonstrate that mindfulness allowed decision-makers to expand their awareness of what was perceivable and possible. When practicing mindfulness, decision-makers were able to employ the "seemingly paradoxical prescription" of achieving interpretive accuracy of a situation through constant, multiplicitous, and ever-changing analyses of their surrounding environment (p. 66). In other words, decision-makers' ability to accurately read a situation—and therefore determine whether or not to follow bandwagon behavior—only occurred when they drew no definitive conclusions about the situation. Here, mindfulness promoted paradoxical

thinking by allowing for uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity long enough to perceive novel solutions (Carson & Langer, 2006).

Over time, people who practice mindfulness may perceive contradictions in innovative and synergistic ways, and move through them accordingly (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Weick et al., 1999). This synergistic outlook may illuminate possibilities otherwise hindered by prior sensemaking (Shapiro, Carlson, Aston, & Freedman, 2006; Weick, 1995)—sensemaking which is socially derived and limited (Weick, 1995; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). This may be because mindfulness reduces the influence of a person's knee-jerk verbal-conceptual processes in the ongoing interpretation of their experience (Ren, Huang, Luo, Wei, Ying, & Ding, 2011). In other words, people who practice mindfulness may develop stronger agency in how they choose to perceive, label, and respond to their experiences as they unfold. Given the above implications, mindfulness may expand creativity, awareness, and problem-solving ability (Capurso et al., 2014).

For example, in a study of mindfulness and problem-solving (Ren et al., 2011), participants were asked to solve several 3-minute computerized insight problems before and after learning and practicing 20 minutes of meditation *or* engaging in a cognitive control task. Results indicated that participants who meditated were able to solve problems they had previously failed in the pre-test. Furthermore, participants who practiced meditation were able to solve more priorly failed problems compared to the control group. Thus, the authors argue meditation plays a role in promoting insight.

Although it is tempting to become focused on the solution-oriented outcomes of creativity and problem-solving, it is important to remember that the current study is

concerned with paradox management for the sake of both organizational performance and employee wellbeing. People who practice mindfulness are shown to exhibit increased empathy (Birnie, Speca & Carlson, 2010), compassion (Boyatzis, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2005), leadership capacity, and role-modeling behavior (Langer, 2010). Thus, leaders who practice mindfulness may be concerned with both managing paradox and cultivating wellbeing. By examining leaders who practice mindfulness, I hope to achieve a deeper understanding of both ends. In what follows, I provide an overview of mindfulness, mindful organizing, and mindful leadership, as they inform my theoretical framework.

Mindfulness: An Integrated Perspective

Within organizational scholarship, mindfulness is conceptualized in two primary ways. The first is an Eastern perspective drawn predominantly from Buddhist philosophies (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). This Eastern approach, including both religious and secular attitudes, informs much of the popular mindfulness practice taught and learned today. The second approach is a Western perspective, conceptualized by psychologist Ellen Langer (Langer, 1989; 2000; 2010). The Western perspective is the most common conceptualization used in organizational scholarship. Because this current study is concerned with contributing to organizational scholarship through the exploration of individual leaders' mindfulness, I utilize both approaches together as an integrated framework. However, I will briefly discuss the two approaches separately so that the reader understands them independently.

The Eastern Approach to Mindfulness

The Eastern approach to mindfulness, which is rooted in ancient Buddhist philosophies, has been taught and vastly secularized over the past 40 years by scholars, psychologists, and philosophers such as Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994; 2003), Tara Brach (2003), Jack Kornfield (2008), Sharon Salzberg (2010), and Mark Epstein (1999; 2013), to name a few. The Eastern approach has been promulgated across the United States, Canada, and other Western societies in the form of books, tapes, meditation retreats, mediation clubs, and smartphone apps. Most mindfulness education is based on the Eastern perspective and involves the practice of metacognition.

Metacognition. Eastern mindfulness is concerned with cultivating awareness, equanimity, and compassion for the self and others (Wright, 2017). Practitioners are encouraged to exercise "benevolent attention to everything that arises into the mind's awareness" (Pipe & Bortz, 2009), and acceptance of what is in order to deal with it fully (Brach, 2003). To achieve these aims, the Eastern perspective emphasizes a meta-cognitive capacity by which people cultivate an awareness of their own thoughts and emotions, with a particular focus on the continual judgments we make of our lived experiences (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; 2003). This capacity has been defined as "a state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 822) or, more recently, "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145). In Eastern mindfulness practice, this awareness often involves practicing curiosity about one's own thoughts. This curiosity allows a

person to transcend his or her practiced ways of knowing by noticing thoughts for what they are (merely, thoughts) (Rogers, 2016).

Eastern mindfulness emphasizes the *storytelling* nature of the mind, and encourages people to see their thoughts as simply narratives which arise, as opposed to facts or reflections of reality (Kornfield, 2008). Here, the focus is often on the *ego,* considered by Eastern Buddhists as a function of the mind that works to socialize a person by influencing their thoughts and actions (Vyner, 2019). From this view, a person's "egocentric mind carries within itself a small repertoire of mind-films that it displays to itself over and over again," and then the person lives into those mind-films as if they were objective reality (p. 10). From this view, people's perception of reality is starkly colored by their *mind-films* (e.g., memories of the past, expectations of the future, who we think we are, how we believe the world works) (Vyner, 2019). These mind-films are essentially stories people carry with them to make sense of the world. Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that people who practice meditation are able to consciously cut through these delusions of everyday meaning-making that plague their psyches, attitudes, and relationships (Hahn, 2017).

Through meditation and other forms of mindfulness practice, people learn to cultivate "a mode of self-awareness in which the mind has nondual awareness of meanings" that arise (Vyner, 2019, p. 263). In other words, mindfulness encourages a mode of perception that simultaneously accounts for the mind-films and the *watcher* of those mind-films (Vyner, 2019, p. 262). By practicing this awareness, people become aware of their *movie-making* processes (Brach, 2003; Vyner, 2019) and, in doing so,

untangle taken-for-granted assumptions. Self-constructed conceptual boundaries of how the world works may become apparent, and new possibilities may be considered. For this reason, meditation has been termed *cognitive restructuring* (Pipe et al., 2009), *metacognitive awareness* (Teasdale et al., 2002), *decentering*, (Fresco et al, 2007), and *reperceiving* (Shapiro et al., 2006). This change in perception often includes an emotional dynamic.

In past research, Eastern mindfulness is most often studied in relation to meditative interventions, such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) workshops. MBSR is an education program founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn, designed as "a means of enriching patients' lives through adaptive coping, focused attention, and cognitive restructuring" (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 131). Research of MBSR and similar interventions demonstrate that people may become empowered with a new means of responding to their lived experience consciously, rather than by default (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Through meditation, people experience a "not wobbling," which "keeps the mind as steady as stone instead of letting it bob about like a pumpkin in water" (Bodhi, 2000, p. 371). In the current study, I anticipate that leaders' communication about paradoxical tensions may reflect their metacognition.

By linking leaders' language with their mindfulness practice and responses to paradox, this study may meaningfully contribute to the new facet of paradox research (Putnam et al., 2016) concerned with *discursive consciousness* (Giddens, 1979; 1984). In addition to awareness of thoughts and judgments that arise in the mind, Eastern mindfulness also encourages metacognitive awareness of emotions.

Emotional awareness. Eastern mindfulness "implies cultivating organizational members' awareness of sources of internal distraction, rather than external ones [...] thus, teaching members to not get caught up in the ebb and flow of thoughts and emotions" (Brummans, 2017, p. 4). Here, the focus is on the processes of mind that promote a heightened awareness of emotional experience. The goal is to be present in body and mind, develop compassion based on wisdom, and act with the "continuous awareness of the impermanent, interdependent nature of phenomena" including self and other (Brummans, 2017, p. 1). Often, this practice promotes emotional wellbeing (Brach, 2003).

Due to the positive emotional outcomes of Eastern mindfulness (Brach, 2003), research on the topic has been taken up in fields as diverse as psychology (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Fresco et al., 2007; Shapiro, Carlson, Aston, & Freedman, 2006; Shapiro et al., 1998), health (Caldwell, Harrison, Adams, Quin, & Greeson, 2010; Pipe et al., 2009; Robinson, Mathews, & Witek-Janusek, 2003), cognitive science, affective neuroscience (Grabovac, Lau, & Willett, 2011), pedagogy (Caldwell et al., 2010), and leadership (Pipe et al., 2009).

Although the individual outcomes of Eastern mindfulness are many, "we have little insight into the ways in which Buddhist mindfulness can inform the management of an actual organization" (Brummans, Hwang, & Cheong, 2013, p. 347). Eastern mindfulness has indeed been absent from much empirical organizational research—save for a few noteworthy examples (e.g., Brummans et al., 2013; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Reb, Narayanan, & Chaturvedi, 2014).

The practice of nonjudgmentally addressing life's unfoldings—whether pleasant or unpleasant—runs counter to the typical ways of responding to seeming paradox, such as withdrawal, anxiety (Tracy, 2004), and inertia (Smith, 2014). Given the emphasis of emotional regulation (e.g., Birnie et al., 2010; Brach, 2003; Brown & Ryan, 2003), an Eastern approach to mindfulness may illuminate the emotional complexity that Link (2017) points to, but does not expand on, in her recent review of paradoxical leadership. Thus, while Eastern mindful organizing is less researched than its Western counterpart (discussed later in this chapter), its study has the potential to provide valuable insight to organizational paradox scholarship.

An Eastern mindfulness approach to organizational scholarship. The value of Eastern mindfulness for organizational scholarship lies, in part, in its capacity to promote stability of attention, resilience in the face of unexpected or problematic circumstances, ethical decision making, and creative action (Brummans, 2017). The study of Eastern mindfulness may be especially appropriate in the context of leadership involving contentious issues (Dunoon & Langer, 2011) or organizational complexity (e.g., paradox). Although empirical organizational investigations of Eastern mindfulness are sparse, interest has been circulating for some time.

A little over a decade ago, Weick and Putnam (2006) wrote a speculative essay in which they opened up a conversation about mindful organizing by comparing Western and Eastern perspectives. Since that time, several studies have explored Eastern mindful organizing. For example, a naturalistic qualitative investigation of mindful leadership at a Buddhist nonprofit in Taiwan (Brummans & Hwang, 2010; Brummans et al., 2013)

examined the ways leaders and members interacted, communicated, and organized around principles of Mahayana Buddhism. In alignment with Buddhist philosophies, the authors found that leaders encouraged organization members to take up "conceptual distinctions pragmatically without clinging to them," and to consider the "interdependent arising" of all things (Brummans & Hwang, 2010, p. 158). The leaders also empowered their followers to lead and manage themselves by aligning with the deepest values of the organization. When juxtaposed with paradox literature (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Link, 2017; Putnam et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2012), leadership behaviors involving Eastern Buddhist philosophies may offer useful insights.

Other studies involving Eastern mindful organizing include a quantitative study of employees' mindfulness in relation to work engagement and well-being (Malinowski & Lim, 2015), and a quantitative examination of mindful leadership on employees' wellbeing and performance (Reb et al., 2014). These studies demonstrate the positive influence of mindfulness on organizational morale, yet they fail to capture the language people use to make sense of and navigate their experiences. Further qualitative investigations of mindfulness, like this one, may shine light on the way that leaders' language informs their ability to work through organizational tensions. In addition to Eastern mindfulness, this study also incorporates aspects from a Western approach.

The Western Approach to Mindfulness

Western mindfulness, also called *sociocognitive* mindfulness, is described as "a general style or mode of functioning through which [an] individual actively engages in reconstructing the environment through creating new categories or distinctions" (Langer,

1989, p. 4). The Western model has been used to study creativity (Langer, Pirson & Delizonna, 2010), learning (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006), leadership (Danoon & Langer, 2011), and organizational efficacy (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011). The Western perspective is concerned with overcoming mind*less*ness of external stimuli, as well as reducing a person's reliance on "past categories, routine action, and fixation on a single perspective" for responding to specific contexts (Brummans, 2017, p. 2). Western mindfulness may valuably benefit the study of paradox management due to the focus on distinction-drawing and novelty-seeking (Langer, 2014; Pirson et al., 2012).

Distinction-drawing. Distinction-drawing takes place when concepts are categorized based on their nuances, as opposed to grouping seemingly similar (yet actually dissimilar) phenomena together as a singular concept. For example, the same employee behavior (e.g., tardiness) may reflect similar or different causal factors (e.g., laziness, lack of reliable transportation, family obligations, working multiple jobs, etc.). By practicing distinction-drawing, leaders avoid the trap of perceiving tardiness as one blanket phenomenon and therefore relying on one standard response (e.g., writing up the employee, firing the person, etc.). Through distinction-drawing, leaders may be better able to problem-solve creative solutions to issues that arise.

Novelty-seeking. In a similar vein, novelty-seeking is a behavior that aims to move people beyond preconceived *mental models* (Senge, 1992) or frameworks that contribute to the "tranquilized obviousness" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 359) of everyday life. Instead of approaching phenomena from the frame, "I already know what I am seeing," novelty-seeking asks, "What else could this be?" and "How might I see this differently?"

Both distinction-drawing and novelty-seeking are context-sensitive. They aim to create new and nuanced categories through which to view the world. In this sense, Western sociocognitive mindfulness may increase creativity and innovation—presumably useful factors in successful paradox management (Miron-Spektor et al., 2011).

One might argue that Western mindfulness focuses on the reduction of mind*less*ness, as opposed to the cultivation of mind*ful*ness (Brummans, 2017). Within the sociocognitive frame, little emphasis is placed on the eventual dissolution of categories (as is the case in Eastern philosophies). Instead, practices aimed to promote Western mindfulness include re-categorization activities (Langer, 2000) that encourage "placing a value on doubt, looking for disconfirming data, and producing new ways of thinking and acting" (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009). This refreshed way of thinking and acting may indeed link up with cognitive and behavioral complexity outlined in Link's (2007) integrated model of paradoxical leadership. Thus, Western mindfulness is a valuable lens for exploring paradox management in relation to leadership.

A Western mindfulness approach to organizational scholarship. In the past, Western mindfulness has been taken up by organizational and management scholars (e.g., Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012) as a means by which to address performance outcomes. To this end, organizational psychologist Karl Weick and colleagues (Weick & Roberts, 1993; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001; 2011; Weick et al., 1999) have been instrumental in bridging Langer's (1989) model with organization and management sciences, predominantly in the examination of High Reliability Organizations (HROs) (Weick et al., 1999), such as flight decks (Weick & Roberts, 1993) and nuclear power plants (Weick & Sutcliffe,

2001). Here, sociocognitive mindfulness is explored in the context of "heedful interrelating" and "collective mind" that must exist within flight deck operations (Weick & Roberts, 1993, p. 374). Because of the life-or-death outcomes related to mindfulness in the above studies, sociocognitive mindfulness has been, for the most part, connected with markers of performance such as cognition, creativity, and critical thinking.

In order to extend Link's (2017) discussion of emotional complexity in relation to paradox, it is important, in the current study, to consider cognitive and emotional aspects of mindfulness. Although Eastern and Western mindfulness do not have discrete boundaries on emotion/cognition, Eastern mindfulness has been more strongly associated with emotional regulation. Thus, both Eastern and Western perspectives of mindfulness are considered together as an integrated framework for exploring how mindfulness informs the way leaders make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise.

A note on Western mindfulness and ethics. Although mindfulness has been garnering increasing interest by organizational scholars and practitioners, it is important to discuss the potential problem of studying—and prescribing—mindfulness as a holistically productive organizational practice. Some scholars (Purser & Milillo, 2014) argue that mindfulness, as it is being integrated and explored in Western society, has been stripped of its ethical philosophical foundations. These scholars claim that a preoccupation with "conceptual mindfulness," based in attention and awareness, and "divorced from its soteriological context reduces it to a self-help technique that is easily misappropriated for reproducing corporate and institutional power, employee pacification, and maintenance of toxic organizational cultures" (p. 1).

Although based loosely in certain Buddhist principles, much of the ethical underpinnings of mindfulness can be stripped from the practice when its practiced in organizational settings. This watered-down version of mindfulness, according to some scholars, can result in incomplete and selective understandings which run "the risk of being co-opted and exploited for maintaining the status quo rather than effecting transformative change" (p. 2). Buddhism, whether a science of mind (Kornfield, 2003), philosophy (Wright, 2017), or religion (Hahn, 2017), is neither value-free nor ethically neutral; however, many corporations appropriate it as such (Purser & Milillio, 2014). Therefore, by exploring and practicing Western mindfulness in organizational settings, scholars and practitioners should be wary of the ways in which mindfulness may be used as a control tactic to shift responsibility or pacify organization members (Purser & Milillo, 2017).

In response to this critical consideration, the current study aims to explore the way leaders' mindfulness practice informs how they, as individuals, make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise—as opposed to exploring the way leaders might implement mindfulness practices into their larger organizations. Much research, described in the section to follow, demonstrates how individual leaders' mindfulness may lead to positive organizational outcomes. Thus, this study remains attuned to the potential pitfalls of organizationally prescribed mindfulness, while also exploring the potentially positive ways that individual leaders' mindfulness may manifest.

Mindfulness & Leadership

Although the term *mindfulness* may reflect an inward practice, it is "more of a social construct that its name, implied mechanisms, and measurement implies" (Sutcliffe, Vogus, & Dane, 2016, p. 57). Mindfulness scholars (Danoon & Langer, 2011; Turner, Reynolds, & Subasic, 2008) agree that a leader's mindfulness can have a widespread positive organizational impact. Organizationally, mindful leadership has been linked with shared organizing practices (Brummans et al., 2013), better leader-follower interactions, overall organizational productivity, and increased employee creativity and memory (Danoon & Langer, 2010). For employees, mindful leadership has been linked with a decrease in accidents (Langer, 2010), and stress (Doucette, Cotton, Arnow, Pipe, & Fitzpatrick 2016). When practiced, mindfulness can become "embedded [in organizations] and powerfully shaped by multiple aspects of context, both in how it is triggered and how it connects to other processes and individual and organizational outcomes" (Sutcliffe et al., 2016, p. 57). Thus, mindfulness may, in fact, "lead to the possibility of a quite different form of leadership" (Danoon & Langer, 2011, n.p).

In terms of navigating paradoxical tensions, leaders' mindfulness may open them to expanded possibilities for learning and improving. Oftentimes, leaders are reserved about acknowledging publicly what they do not know (Langer, 2010). However, good leaders can valuably acknowledge the universal limits of knowing, and instead "be awake in the moment" (p. 60). Even the most visionary of leaders are unable to predict the future (Langer, 2010). This is why focusing on the problem—as opposed to the limitations of one's present knowledge—may allow for better problem solving by

attuning leaders to opportunities and alerting them to risk (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006). Mindfulness may mitigate confusion and encourage effective problem-solving. Langer (2010) put it like this:

> When mindful we can take advantage of opportunities and avert the dangers that don't yet exist. This is true for the leader and the led [...] By learning how to exploit the power of uncertainty maybe all of us will wake up (p. 60).

In short, by practicing mindfulness, leaders may be more sensitive to context, and better able to see change and evolution—valuable skills for managing seeming contradictions amidst organizational hustle and bustle.

Langer's (2010) focus on the collective *waking up* hints at the humanistic (Pirson, 2017) aims of this project as well. A leader's mindfulness, while potentially contributing to their response to paradox, may simultaneously contribute to organizational wellbeing through increased empathy (Trent et al., 2016), perspective taking (Dunoon & Langer, 2011), and mindful role modeling (Langer, 2010). Beyond the leaders' personal mindfulness, his or her most important responsibility may be to cultivate mindfulness of organizational paradoxes across the larger organization. A leader's communication may be a path toward this end.

Danoon and Langer (2011) lament that most leadership research—from the organizational and psychological fields, presumably—treats leadership communication as a means of visionary messaging that involves inspiring and persuasive stories, metaphors, and emotional appeals. They speculate, however, that mindful leadership language goes beyond the constraints of this traditional model—something consistent with a theoretical

lens of communication as constitutive—to distribute mindfulness outwardly through the use of language. This may include language that is descriptive rather than judgmental, that favors conditional over the absolute, and that seeks to disclose some of what has been hidden or unspoken (e.g., biases and perceptions) regarding the issue or situation (Danoon & Langer, 2011).

This current study will build on Danoon and Langer's (2011) speculative ideas of mindful leadership language to identify language that is grounded in mindfulness, and that may generate productive problem-solving in the face of paradox. Thus, this study will contribute to the burgeoning domain of organizational mindfulness research (Sutcliffe et al., 2016), as well as the domain of "paradoxical leadership" (Lavine 2014; Link, 2017). Given the influence leaders have on their larger organizations, it is reasonable that leaders' communication may inform mindful organizing practices.

Mindful Organizing

Mindful organizing is a "dynamic process comprising specific ongoing actions" taken that reflect mindfulness in communication and behavior (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012, p. 724). Mindful organizing is social (Cooren, 2004), communication-based (McPhee, Myers, & Trethewey, 2006), and can be observed in place and time, such as during meetings, in emails, and in hallways conversations. Mindful organizing is achieved through bottom-up processes that are somewhat unstable and must be renegotiated and re-accomplished regularly (Brummans, 2017). Given the communicative processes by which organizational norms are distributed (Cooren, 2004; McPhee et al., 2006), and the ability for leaders' language to impact organizational sensemaking (Barge, 2014;

Fairhurst, 2007), it follows that a leader's mindfulness may have the ability to impact mindfulness in their organizations on a larger scale, and thus influence the way organization members approach problems that arise.

Summary of Literature and Research Questions

In summary, the areas of literature that situate the current study include organizational paradox, leadership, and mindfulness. Organizational paradoxes occur when two or more things appear contradictory, yet both are necessary for the health of the organization (Link, 2017). Due to their complexity and absurdity, past research has argued that paradoxes tend to paralyze action and often lead to problems involving organizational performance and employee wellbeing (Putnam, Fairhurst, & Banghardt, 2016). When faced with a paradoxical tension, the way a person perceives of the tension influences their ability to make sense of it and navigate it (Putnam et al, 2016; Tracy, 2004). Furthermore, perception may be a result of language framing (Fairhurst, 2007). Thus, the way a paradox is discursively framed may inform the way it is made sense of and navigated.

Leaders are in the unique position to productively reframe paradoxical tensions for their larger organizations due to the reach and influence of their messaging (Gioia, 1986; Lavine 2014). However, little is known about how to teach leaders to effectively reframe paradox (Link, 2017). Because language often reflects cognition (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and sensemaking (Gioia,1986), by focusing on the way mindfulness informs how leaders talk *about* paradoxes—including metaphors and/or discursive consciousness—scholars may gain insight into nuanced and mindful sensemaking and

navigation strategies that are not apparent in the current literature. And, scholars may discover useful framing strategies that give sense to paradoxical tensions in mindful and productive ways. Therefore, the discursive approach to paradox may contribute to this research gap by extending theory while meaningfully informing useful strategies for practical application.

In terms of practical application, a focus on language may offer replicable communication strategies. Perhaps, for example, people can use specific metaphors to reframe a paradoxical situation into something perceived as more approachable (e.g., "Let's pull back to see the forest through the trees. What else can we notice when we take a bigger view?"). A focus on language may illuminate specific language-based strategies (e.g., metaphors) for ameliorating paradoxes. These strategies could then be incorporated into college leadership courses, as well as organizational/leadership training programs.

Putnam and colleagues (2016) recently proposed the *constitutive approach,* which grounds paradoxical tensions in organizational communication (e.g., routine talk, metaphor, stories, texts). From this view, paradoxes may be constituted—and dissolved—through communication. The current study aims to contribute to the constitutive view of paradox by interrogating the way leaders can productively make sense of and navigate paradoxes that arise through their communication and behavior.

To explore these topics, I have chosen to focus on leaders who may be uniquely practiced in paradoxical thinking: people who practice *mindfulness*. As a key aspect of mindfulness practice, people learn to become comfortable with uncertainty and complexity (Capurso, Fabbro & Crescentini, 2014). As a result, people who practice

mindfulness often learn to hold contradictory concepts in a generative tension (Wright, 2017). Thus, research suggests that people who practice mindfulness in the form of meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and/or cognitive exercises (Langer, 1989) may learn to perceive of contradictions in uniquely productive ways (Shapiro et al., 2006; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011; Weick et al., 1999). To that end, the current study investigates the ways leaders who practice mindfulness make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions by asking the following research questions:

RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?

RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?

CHAPTER 5

METHODS & PROCEDURES

I conducted a qualitative study involving synchronous, semi-structured, in-depth interviews of leaders who practice mindfulness. Qualitative interviews allowed me to explore how leaders' communication about paradoxical tensions reflects the ways they make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions. In the following section, I describe my sampling and recruitment, data collection, and analysis procedures. The following research protocol was approved by Arizona State University's Institutional Review Board.

Sampling and Recruitment

My sampling was purposive (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). I recruited individuals based on their formal roles as organizational leaders, as well as their regular formal mindfulness practice (e.g., meditation, cognitive mindfulness exercises, mindful journaling, mindful eating, mindful yoga). Because of the potential difficulty of locating and identifying leaders who practice mindfulness, I anticipated that finding participants may prove challenging. Therefore, I decided to use snowball sampling (Tracy, 2013), in which current participants refer future participants. In May 2018, a key informant at ASU's Center for Mindfulness, Compassion, and Resilience introduced me via email to her network of friends and colleagues who fit recruitment criteria, and who she believed may serve as future participants. Of these initial introductions, approximately half were interested in being interviewed. Many of these participants connected me to others from

within their own networks. I continued this sampling strategy for nine months, from May 2018 to January 2019.

Participants

Participants initially included 42 people who held formal leadership roles (i.e., with direct reports and/or followers) in organizations across the United States. Industries included education (*n* = 12), wellness (*n* = 8), healthcare (*n* = 6), law (*n* = 4), organizational training and development (*n* = 3), digital media production (*n* = 2), counseling (*n* = 2), non-profit (*n* = 1), retail (*n* = 1), finance (*n* = 1), human capital (*n* = 1), and energy (*n* = 1). Participants' leadership roles included CEO, Director, Partner, Founder, Owner, Senior Vice President, Manager, and others. Participants included 30 females and 12 males.

Participants also reported engaging in regular mindfulness practice. Meditation was the primary mindfulness practice reported (*n* = 36), with the length of their practice ranging from less than one year to over 45 years. Participants also reported a combination of other mindfulness activities, including mindful yoga, mindful listening, mindful eating, mindful journaling, and cognitive awareness exercises.

Qualifying Participants for Data Inclusion

To qualify participants for this study, participants were asked to complete the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (FFMQ) (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006). The FFMQ is a 39-item self-report measure that measures five key facets of mindfulness: *observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience,* and *non-reactivity to inner experience* (Baer et al., 2006). The FFMQ was

developed by integrating five independently developed and reliable mindfulness scales, including the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory (FMI) (Walach, Buchheld, Buttenmuller, Kleinknecht, & Schmidt, 2006), the Cognitive Affective Mindfulness Scale (CAMS) (Hayes & Feldman, 2004), the Mindfulness Questionnaire (MQ) (Chadwick, Taylor, & Abba 2005), and the Kentucky Inventory of Mindfulness Skills (KIMS) (Baer, Smith & Allen, 2004). Therefore, the FFMQ serves as a holistic mindfulness measure (Williams, Dalgleish, Karl, & Kuyken, 2014).

The FFMQ is reliable, with the following Chronbach's alphas values obtained: observing ($\alpha = .83$), describing ($\alpha = .91$), acting with awareness ($\alpha = .87$), non-judging ($\alpha = .87$), and non-reactivity ($\alpha = .75$) (Baer et al., 2006). The FFMQ includes statements such as, "When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving," "I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings," "I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions," "I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them," and "When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted." Each item is measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 reflecting *never or very rarely true* and 5 reflecting *very often or always true*. Some items needed to be reversed to score participants' responses. Once adjusted, higher scores represent more mindfulness across the five facets.

Including and excluding participants based on their FFMQ score. Copious research (e.g., Baer et al., 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Fiol & O'Connor, 2003; Langer, 1989; Vyner, 2019; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2011) suggests that mindfulness is a particular

form of cognitive, emotional, and physical awareness that must be cultivated with intention. Particularly in Western society, unless mindfulness is practiced purposefully and regularly, people tend to operate with automaticity and mind*less*ness (Langer, 1989). Thus, if a person scores higher than the midpoint, this may suggest that they are particularly mindful.

Only interviewees who completed the FFMQ and scored above the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.00$), were included in the study. Of the 42 total participants, 39 completed the FFMQ. Those who did not complete the FFMQ ($n = 3$) were eliminated from the study. Of the 39 people who completed the FFMQ, one person scored lower than the midpoint on the scale. This person ($n = 1$) was also eliminated from the study.

The remaining participants ($n = 38$), each scored higher than the midpoint on the FFMQ, and were therefore included in the findings and analysis. The FFMQ was reliable for this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). A one-sample t-test was conducted to compare participants' scores to the midpoint of the 5-point scale. As a group, participants' scores ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .39$) were significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.00$), $t(37) = 14.72$, $p = .000$. Twenty-eight females and 10 males were included in the final analysis.

Participants completed the surveys after being interviewed about paradox, leadership, and mindfulness. This was because the focus data of the study was interview data, and I did not want the survey completion to affect the interview. To account for the possible demand effects of the interview on the subsequent surveys, I framed the survey

as a way to measure the type of mindfulness practiced, rather than participants' level of mindfulness.

Interview Data

Each participant verbally consented to be interviewed and recorded for this study. Prior to analysis, all 42 interviews were audio recorded and then professionally transcribed. In total, interviews resulted in 2267 minutes of audio and 621.5 minutes of transcribed text. The length of the average interview was approximately 54 minutes. After excluding the four participants who did not qualify for the study, due to failing to complete the survey (n = 3) or scoring below the midpoint of the scale (n = 1), the qualified interviews resulted in 2023 minutes of audio and 559.5 single-spaced pages of transcribed text. The length of the average interview was approximately 53 minutes.

In-Depth Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews are meant to galvanize researcher-interviewee discussion that centers around the meanings participants attribute to events in their lives. In-depth qualitative interviews are particularly valuable for eliciting rich, narrative data that tell holistic stories (Tracy, 2013), and for illuminating conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), whiIdech can guide perceptions of reality. Qualitative interviews are also useful for encouraging sensemaking (Weick, 1995)—one of the strongest points of access researchers have to participants' processes of cognition (Weick, 1988). Since much of what participants may believe about the world or themselves is constructed by cultural norms, social structures, and scripts (Gioia, 1986; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Weick,

1995), in-depth, qualitative interviews can bring to light mindsets and beliefs that underpin participants' experiences.

In this sense, qualitative interviews "provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and oftentimes energizing" (Tracy, in press, n.p.). To capture meaning-making and discovery, I structured my interview guide around participants' experiences. I asked interviewees to use their life as data (Weick, 1995) by reflecting on how they acted in the past, as well as how they would advise someone else to act in a similar situation in the future. In an attempt to understand how participants made sense of, navigated, and communicated their problem-solving processes in the face of paradoxical organizational tensions, I paid particular attention to the stories they told (Tracy, 2013), as well as *how* they told them (Fairhurst, 2007), including which metaphors they used to describe them (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Interview guide. I designed the interview guide to primarily include generative questions, which are "non-directive, non-threatening queries that serve to generate (rather than dictate) frameworks for talk" (Tracy, in press, n.p.). For example, I included questions such as, "Please think of a time at work when you felt pushed and pulled between two or more goals that competed with one other. How did you navigate the situation?" And, "If you could wave a magic wand, and forever be perfectly mindful, what would this look like in terms of your leadership?"

After conducting the first several interviews, I narrowed the guide by omitting several questions that appeared tangential to the aim and scope of this study, or that could

instead be asked in the Qualtrics survey (e.g., "how often do you practice mindfulness?"). I used two primary versions of the interview guide[1]. Version A was structured to focus first on paradox management strategies and second on mindfulness practice, and Version B was structured to focus first on mindfulness practice and second on paradox management strategies. By using two versions, I was able to consider whether major differences emerged between participants who were asked to think about their paradox management strategies first, versus participants who were asked to consider their mindfulness practice *before* disclosing their paradox management strategies. In total, 19 participants received Version A, and 23 participants received Version B. Of the participants whose interviews were included in the study findings, 18 participants received Version A, and 20 participants received Version B. No major differences emerged in the data generated by the two different versions.

Analysis

I employed a *phronetic iterative* approach to data collection and analysis (Tracy, in press). Phronesis is concerned with *practical wisdom* (Flyvbjerg, 2012), and a phronetic approach to data collection and analysis "aims to result in use-inspired, practical research that not only builds theory, but also provides guidance on social practice and action" (Tracy, in press, n.p.). Iterative analysis borrows methods from grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2017)—namely, the examination of emergent data along the way (Charmaz, 2014)—while focusing more narrowly on "specific aspects of the data that extend theory" (Tracy, in press, n.p.). Thus, a phronetic iterative approach is

[1] See Appendices A and B for each version of the interview guide.

one in which the researcher alternates between emergent data, creative insights, and existing theories and frameworks, in order to progress theoretical and practical knowledge (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013; Tracy, in press).

As I conducted interviews, data were considered in this abductive, interpretive (Charmaz, 2014), and iterative manner. To engage data in this way, I reflected upon the sensitizing concepts (Glaser & Strauss, 2017) of *mindfulness* (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Langer, 2010), *paradox* (Link, 2017; Putnam et al., 2016; Smith, 2015), and *sensegiving* (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) at each stage of the research process. Sensitizing concepts are central theories or frameworks which guide data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). My aim was to hold these concepts with awareness while allowing the data to guide ongoing analysis and future interviews. Here, I attempted to bring the practice of mindfulness to the qualitative research process (Brummans, 2014) as part of my analytic method. To do this, I prioritized a beginners' mind during the early stages of the analysis process by employing a grounded approach to coding, as opposed to laying my theoretical framework and sensitizing concepts on top of the data.

As I moved through analysis phases (outlined below) a phronetic iterative approach allowed me to continuously adapt my interview guide toward more focused research questions based on past participants' interviews and deeper readings of the literature. As part of this iterative process, I wrote several analytic memos, kept a dissertation diary in which I jotted down insights as they arose, recorded myself speaking into an audio recorder on my phone, talked about my project with family and friends, and read deeper into the literatures involving paradox (Putnam et al., 2016), mindfulness

(Brummans, 2017), and discursive leadership (Fairhurst, 2007). I also turned to my personal experiences with mindfulness to gain deeper insights into what I was seeing. Here, practicing critical self-reflexivity was key.

Self-Reflexivity and Researcher Role

Given my iterative approach and interpretivist lens (Lincoln et al., 2011)—through which I see "both reality and knowledge as constructed and reproduced through communication, interaction, and practice" (Tracy, in press, n.p.)—I avoid claiming distance from my data. Instead, I view data and resulting findings as local, socially-constructed, and emergent (Anderson & Baym, 2004). Contrary to the notion of an independent fixed reality that can be discovered, my interpretivist lens situates reality as constituted in language, human interaction, perception (Lincoln et al., 2011), and phenomenological awareness of self and other (Cunliffe, 2004).

I practiced self-reflexivity of my biases and inclinations throughout the research process (Cunliffe, 2004; Tracy, 2013). For example, I viewed my participation in this research as part of the phenomena I aimed to study, and I was attuned to the way my position influenced my research design, data collection, and analysis (Tracy, 2013). I considered the ways my identity as a Buddhist, as well as my experience (albeit modest) with meditation, may inform emergent findings. I tried to be attuned to the ways in which my experience with the foundations of mindfulness may have enabled my ability to discern moments of mindful language in participants' interviews, while simultaneously constraining my ability to see that language in other potential ways (Cunliffe, 2004). One

way I mitigated over-interpreting was by conducting regular *member reflections* (Tracy, 2010).

Member Reflections

After conducting approximately 15 interviews, I began creating a space for member reflections at certain points throughout the interviews. Member reflections allow researchers to seek clarity, or share emerging insights with participants, to see if early findings resonate with new participants (Tracy, 2010). At times, participants confirmed emerging insights. At other times, participants clarified or re-articulated their responses. Sometimes, member reflections led to deeper and more nuanced explanations of the phenomena being discussed—something that can occur in in-depth qualitative interviews (Tracy, 2013) through retroactive sensemaking (Weick, 1995). In this way, interviews went beyond mining for information, and instead created deeper meaning in their unfolding (Tracy, 2013).

Coding Methods

After I had conducted 31 interviews, and I was observing major themes develop across multiple participants, I began formally coding the data. I continued to recruit and interview participants during this iterative process until I reached 42 interviews in total (38 of which qualified for the study). Following is a detailed description of my analysis procedures as they unfolded.

Open coding. On October 22, 2018, I used Nvivo software to begin coding the first 6 interviews in order to answer the question, "What is happening here?" (Charmaz, 2014). As I read and coded each transcript, I listened along to its corresponding audio

recording in order to fact-check transcript quality and consider participants' tonality. This initial open coding resulted in 459 codes. Because I focused on participants' in vivo language by coding their exact words (Saldaña, 2016), many of these initial 459 codes overlapped conceptually.

Focused thematic coding. Next, I began to thematically organize the initial 459 codes in Nvivo by paying special attention to codes that were frequent in number, as well as codes that aligned or contrasted with current literature. I also merged codes that were conceptually redundant, such as "letting go," and "non-attachment." At this point in the process, I engaged in patterned coding (Saldaña, 2016). Patterned coding identifies meta codes by grouping open codes into smaller categories; they are "explanatory or inferential codes, ones that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 236).

Between November 14 and December 2, 2018, I continued to organize and hierarchically categorize existing codes in Nvivo, resulting in a list of 110 codes. These codes were used to develop major thematic codes that would eventually be used in the codebook. As I refined the codes further, I created a codebook in Google Sheets for the codes that were most relevant to answering my research questions. The final codebook contains 20 thematic codes, including each code's name, abbreviation, brief description, and examples from the data. During the months of December 2018 and January 2019, I used the codebook to complete thematic analysis of all the interviews, including re-coding the initial six interviews.

Idiographic metaphor coding. After first coding the data thematically as described above, and illustrating these themes with examples, I then unpacked the implications of participants' idiographic metaphors that emerged within the examples. To examine the way that participants made sense of their experiences, I focused on coding *idiographic* metaphors (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016). An idiographic approach elicits rich information by teasing out metaphors that show up unprompted in people's everyday talk (Tracy & Malvini Redden, 2016, p. 240). Metaphor analysis is particularly appropriate for demonstrating the way people conceptualize their experiences, including what they perceive as possible or impossible; in other words, "metaphorical framings enable or constrain actions for possibility and transformation" (p. 239). Thus, interpretation of idiographic metaphors is a valuable method for analyzing how people make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions. Idiographic metaphor analysis aligns, conceptually and theoretically, with my research curiosity involving the constitutive view of paradox. Exploring the way leaders talk *about* and *through* paradoxical tensions via metaphor provides insight into how they constitute or potentially ameliorate paradoxes through their communication.

Summary

Chapter five provided an overview of my sampling and recruitment procedures, data collection, and analysis. In-depth qualitative interviews were the focal data source, and thematic, patterned, and idiographic metaphor coding were used to analyze data. I initially recruited, interviewed, and coded the interviews of 42 participants. However, prior to final analysis, I disqualified four participants from the study for failing to

complete the survey (n = 3) or scoring below the midpoint of the scale (n = 1). Only participants who completed the FFMQ *and* scored above the midpoint of the scale were included in the final analysis. In the next two chapters, I will report and describe the primary findings that emerged from my analysis.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING SENSE OF PARADOXICAL TENSIONS

This chapter unfolds as follows: First, I overview a broad landscape of paradoxical tensions that participants described in our interviews. This section does not address a specific research question, but instead orients the readers to the varieties of paradoxes shared by participants. The chapter then turns to reviewing the major findings in regard to *RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings suggest participants made sense of paradoxical tensions by 1) employing *both-and* and *more-than* approaches, 2) practicing emotional awareness through discursive consciousness, and 3) cultivating non-attachment of the outcome.

An Overview of Participants' Paradoxical Tensions

When I asked participants, "Can you tell me about a time at work when you felt pushed and pulled between two or more goals that competed with one another?" they shared a number of paradoxical tensions in their respective fields of healthcare, education, law, media, counseling, organizational training, energy, and wellness. Out of the 38 participants included in this study, seven people shared issues relating to *competing stakeholders' values*. For example, Rebecca, the director of operations at a crisis counseling center, informed me that at her crisis center, it was important for call-center employees to answer as many calls as possible, while also remaining on the line with sensitive cases. This meant that employees were required to achieve both breadth and depth of calls, and therefore withstand long hours of emotional labor. As the director

of operations, Rebecca routinely felt pushed and pulled between prioritizing the wellbeing of the incoming callers, *or* prioritizing the wellbeing of her staff. This tension actually created emotional labor for Rebecca because she acted as a liaison between top management (who were concerned primarily with incoming callers), and her employees (who struggled to maintain their own wellbeing). In the above case, and several more, participants felt pushed and pulled between prioritizing certain stakeholders over others.

Seven other participants shared issues that related to *maintaining quality v.s quantity* of a product or service. For example, Leon, regional chief nursing officer at a large hospital, was simultaneously tasked with prioritizing the number of patients seen in the emergency room, as well as the quality of care they received. On one hand, the hospital benefited from the frequency of emergency room visits. One the other hand, efficacy of care was considered a top priority. It was Leon's job to ensure both ends were met simultaneously. For a period of time, Leon would attend daily meetings in which the demands completely contradicted each other. In our interview, Leon explained how he made sense of and navigated these murky and complex waters. Violet, the owner of a philanthropic children's mindfulness education program, shared with me that she constantly felt tangled in an ongoing contradiction. Violet was adamant that her organization only hired teachers with the highest quality education; at the same time, she was adamant they meet the needs of their growing student population. In both of the above instances, participants felt pushed and pulled between the paradoxical tensions of quality vs. quantity.

Another major paradoxical tension centered around *sharing vs. maintaining leadership* over certain tasks. Four participants described tensions that arose from their desire to delegate work tasks to junior employees while simultaneously wishing to withhold those responsibilities for fear that the work would not be accomplished correctly. For example, Nichole, director at an international organizational training company, recently felt torn between whether or not to provide a junior leader with more responsibility and autonomy. The work that needed to be done was significant to the organization's reputation. Nichole knew that although this junior leader showed promise, she was fairly new and inexperienced. This created a tension for Nichole who wanted to simultaneously share and maintain control over this work. When I spoke to Nichole, she was still deciding what to do. In the above cases, as well as others, the paradoxical tensions of sharing vs. maintaining control underpinned participants' interviews.

The remaining participants shared myriad paradoxical tensions. A few participants discussed tensions that arose when trying to balance inclusion against other values—such as innovation and profit. For example, Samantha, the director of women's studies at a large public university, informed me that she struggled to promote inclusion amidst rising tuition prices that deterred interested applicants. And Kathy, advisor to the president at a large university, recently struggled to include key constituents at a university-wide innovation event due to the university's sprawling campuses and the physical dispersion of students.

Some participants discussed the paradoxical tensions of taking risks and saving money, and others shared the need to increase productivity while dealing with time

constraints or trying to maintain self-care. Other participants shared their experience navigating tensions that seemed to pit profit against mission-driven values. For example, Georgia, a physician and the owner of a mindful eating organization, shared with me that, early on, she struggled to define her program amidst the cultural norms for what a healthy eating organization *should* offer its customers. On one hand, customers expected to be promised weight loss. And although Georgia hoped to obtain those customers in order to build her account base and help people with their dietary habits, she also felt that by offering a "weight loss program," she would contribute to the unhealthy social standards that equate beauty with being thin. In the above case, as with others, the push and pull between profit and key values created paradoxical tensions for participants.

As illustrated in this contextual discussion, participants experienced a plethora of paradoxical tensions in myriad forms from a diverse range of fields and job roles. This variety provides a rich data set from which to reflect and theorize. In particular, I investigated the ways these leaders made sense of paradoxical tensions, paying particular attention to the metaphors they used.

Making Sense of Paradoxical Tensions

In what follows, I discuss the major findings in response to *RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings suggest participants made sense of paradoxical tensions by 1) employing *both-and* and *more-than* approaches, 2) practicing emotional awareness through discursive consciousness, and 3) cultivating non-attachment to the outcome.

Engaging Both-And & More-Than Approaches

Throughout the data, participants' experiences reflected *both-and* and *more-than* responses to paradoxical tensions. *Both-and* responses reflect a nondualistic mindset, in which people believe the two tensions can be accomplished simultaneously (Punam et al., 2016; Smith & Lewis, 2011). The *both-and* approach is comprised of three categories of responding: 1) *paradoxical thinking*, 2) *vacillation or spiraling inversion*, and 3) *integration and balance*. The *more-than* approach, which is an extension of the *both-and* framework, involves higher-level responses that are, broadly speaking, dialogic in nature. *More-than* responses include: 1) *reframing and transcendence*, 2) *connection, third spaces, and dialogue*, and 3) *reflexive practice and serious playfulness*.

When reflecting on how they made sense of paradoxical tensions, participants routinely discussed *both-and* and *more-than* approaches. Oftentimes, the *both-and* concept of *paradoxical thinking* was discussed in conjunction with *more-than* responses. Participants' use of the *both-and* and *more-than* approaches were distinctly tied with key mindfulness concepts (e.g., comfortability with uncertainty, belief in impermanence). In the section that follows, I provide an account of the various ways participants made sense of paradoxical tension through the *both-and* and *more-than* frameworks, beginning with a discussion of *paradoxical thinking.* For organization purposes, this section is organized by the *both-and* responses.

Paradoxical thinking. Participants routinely exhibited *paradoxical thinking,* a key tenet of the *both-and* framework, as a foregrounding philosophy to their experience of paradoxical tensions. Alongside *paradoxical thinking*, participants discussed various

more-than responses, including *reframing*, *transcendence*, *connection*, *dialogue*, and *reflexive practice*. In other words, *paradoxical thinking* was reflected in participants' overall philosophy about tensions (e.g., "these contradictory goals can coexist"), while participants used *more-than* responses (e.g., *reframing*) to approach the situation. In what follows, I show how various *more-than* concepts were used, alongside *paradoxical thinking,* to make sense of paradoxical tensions.

Paradoxical thinking & reframing. Eve, the associate chair of the psychology department at a large university, felt pushed and pulled between wanting to offer fair opportunities to her entire staff, while also wanting to accommodate certain faculty who made significantly larger requests for resources. Reflecting on this paradoxical tension, Eve informed me, "there have to be principles in place, and [I have to] also support people, it's *both.* [...]. Hopefully, those aren't conflicting but sometimes they are." When I asked her how she managed these paradoxical tensions, she responded,

> I would say that I have found it useful to try to not get caught in the trenches of the contradiction, but to try to step back and see the bigger view for both of whatever the positions are that are going on, and trying to see if there might be some out-of-the-box ways of viewing it that can accommodate both, that you can't see when you're in the midst of the trench. [You think] you have to take a side, you have to take a side. If you can allow yourself to not have to pick a side and step back and see what's possible, if you're allowed not to pick a side, you may see opportunities that are 'definite' otherwise.

Eve used the metaphor, “try to not get caught in the trenches” to elucidate the experience of falling into burdensome *either-or* thinking without the ability to climb out and see more options. Like being stuck in a trench, feeling forced to pick a side can obscure one’s vision and blind leaders to the terrain. Eve’s mindfulness informed her ability to consider nonduality. By practicing paradoxical thinking, Eve made sense of the contradiction in a way that encouraged a bigger view and thus more flexibility in how to manage the situation.

In the end, Eve chose to postpone offering immediate resources for the inquiring employees, and instead offered them long-term support in the form of non-financial assistance. Here, Eve used the *more-than* concept of *reframing* to give sense to her decision for her staff. By framing her support as “long-term,” she communicated commitment to her faculty—even though she did not accommodate their specific and immediate requests.

In another example, Leon, the regional chief nursing officer at a large hospital, reflected upon a situation in which he dealt with the paradoxical tensions of quality and quantity. Leon shared with me that, historically, his hospital earned compensation for the duration of patients’ stay, as well as the number of procedures performed. However, this old quantity-based model was being replaced by a new quality-based model which prioritized efficacy of care. For a period of time, Leon was required to meet both ends. He told me,

> We had four very busy emergency departments that saw in total, a little over 200,000 patients a year. [...] In the old model, the more you did, the more you got

> paid. If a patient came in and you gave the patient an infection, and you left a sponge in their stomach and had to go back for surgery, and did all these different things to them, you hurt the patient— the more you hurt the patient, the more the hospital got paid. The more volume that you did, the more the hospital got paid.

However, with the new quality-oriented model, "you get *penalized* for all these things," he told me. "You don't get paid for any of them, and you are incentivized for keeping people *out* of the emergency department." Given these competing tensions, Leon felt continuously pushed and pulled between the old and new way. He informed me,

> I would literally go to meetings at 8:00 in the morning and get beat up because the emergency department volumes were soft and not growing. I would go to a 9:00 meeting where I would get beat up because we weren't keeping people out of the emergency department. I literally lived for two years of my life in this dichotomy. Half of my life, I was getting yelled at because there wasn't enough volume, and then the next minute I was getting yelled at because there was too much.

When I asked Leon how he dealt with this dichotomy, he explained that he armed himself with knowledge about impending future changes, while simultaneously reminding himself and his staff to remain focused on the present moment:

> I made sure that I really understood the changes that were coming financially and what we needed to do to prepare ourselves for the future. At the same time, I had to keep reminding people that we were in the present every single day and this is the reality of today's world.

Although Leon believed these tensions to be contradictory, he demonstrated *paradoxical thinking.* Even when the external circumstances called him to shift between the old and new model, Leon held both the present and the future simultaneously. Furthermore, he discursively framed the situation as commensurable for his staff by "reminding people that we were in the present moment," while also communicating "why in the long run these changes were important." Through his communication, Leon was able to, as be put it, "model out where we were headed." In doing this, Leon was able to provide a future roadmap for his staff, while not losing sight of the current state of affairs.

In both of the above examples, *paradoxical thinking* served as an overarching philosophy grounded in mindfulness, and the *more-than* response of *reframing* served as a sensemaking tool Eve and Leon used to make *paradoxical thinking* manifest for themselves and their staff.

Paradoxical thinking & transcendence. The following excerpt also makes use of *paradoxical thinking,* coupled with the *more-than* response of *transcendence.* Transcendence occurs when paradoxical tensions are positioned "in a novel relationship to each other by moving outside of a paradoxical system to a new level of meaning or by expanding the boundaries of an organization's context" (Putnam et al., 2016, p. 65). Curtis, the founder of an online and print magazine, recently exhibited *paradoxical thinking* and *transcendence* when he was forced to reconsider old marketing tactics.

In the magazine's early years, Curtis' company shared profits with relevant organizations that would promote the burgeoning publication. However, Curtis' company had grown exponentially over the years, and it no longer made monetary sense to share

profits in this way. Curtis was concerned that if he revised the initial arrangements, vital relationships would be damaged. He shared,

> When we launched the magazine, we had three or four organizations with large memberships, and we had them promote us to their membership in exchange for sharing the income. Well, [now] you could easily go to, "How can we monetize?" We could establish a budget for me to use in community development, and I could stand that budget with the ad sales guy. That's a way to actually monetize the whole thing and make it accountable, but there also has to be an underlying appreciation throughout the organization that these people are our partners, not just our customers.

Here, Curtis claimed the easy option would have been to simply ask, "How can we monetize?" And, in fact, he had asked himself this question early on. However, by simply attending to the question, "How can we monetize?" Curtis and his team would have prioritized one tension (profit) while ignoring the other (relationships), resulting in *either-or* thinking. Instead, Curtis demonstrated *paradoxical thinking* when we said, "there *also* has to be an underlying appreciation throughout the organization that these people are our partners, not just our customers." When I asked him how he accomplished both paradoxical tensions, he told me:

> The way in which we're building the audience has been through connection-building, collaboration, and bringing so much benefit to the people that we shine a light on, that then they feel compelled to pay that benefit back in a positive way.

Here, Curtis explained how he chose to elevate relationships *in order* to elevate profit. Through the *more-than* concept of *transcendence,* he made sense of the paradoxical tensions through a novel relationship in which new forms of organizing created something even better than before.

Similarly to Curtis, Lindsey also described *paradoxical thinking* and *transcendence*. Lindsey, the executive director of a university wellness center, regularly felt pushed and pulled between productivity and (somewhat ironically) mindfulness. She explained that her university prioritized "constant action, constant results, constant production." However, Lindsey and her team also believed in the value of mindfulness and "calmness." This caused an ongoing tension that Lindsey navigates every day:

> One of the paradoxes in this particular role is the larger university environment, which is very high intensity and very invested in doing, doing, doing, constant action, constant results, constant production. [...] That's the standard, whatever. There's this push and pull between productivity and calmness, and not a lot of people see calmness, not a lot of people see mindfulness and thoughtfulness in their roles at [this university]. I think that's one thing that we're here to teach people. You can be both. And, in fact, you're more productive when you are peaceful and thoughtful. You actually end up getting more accomplished if you think about what you're doing [...] and you're mindful while you're doing it.

Here, Lindsey suggested that not only can both productivity and calmness coexist, but "you actually end up getting more accomplished if you think about what you're doing." In this instance, it was Lindsey's mindfulness that informed her ability to make sense of

productivity and mindfulness through the lenses of *paradoxical thinking* and *transcendence*.

Paradoxical thinking & connection. Other participants reflected upon *paradoxical thinking* in conjunction with the *more-than* concept of *connection*. Brenda, the founding director of a private school for the past 30 years, reflected upon an instance in which she felt pushed and pulled between terminating an employee and allowing the employee to leave on her own terms. Brenda had discovered that the employee provided false credentials in her employment materials, which was reason enough for termination. However, the employee was highly integrated into the school, with both of her children attending the school, and numerous relationships with other faculty and parents. Brenda informed me that while she felt the need to terminate this employee in order to maintain the integrity of her staff, she also felt the need to allow the employee to stay in order to not to cause upheaval amongst the organization members. Considering this recent tension, Brenda reflected:

> One of the phrases that my yoga teacher has taught us a lot was this idea of "both/and." [It's] what I was saying, that most situations aren't really a black and white situation. There's a lot of gray area, and sometimes you have to just be okay with both pieces of it.

Brenda's language, "okay with both pieces of it," reflects paradoxical thinking through her comfortability with the contradiction. When I asked Brenda how she was comfortable with "both pieces," she shared with me that her understanding of impermanence, a key

mindfulness concept, allowed her to let the situation unfold over time, instead of coming to a quick decision:

> The mindfulness is that you're keeping an eye on it, even if you look like you're not doing anything. Sometimes, you just have to give it time. In most cases, when we have had an employee that we really were wanting to terminate, a lot of times we would just set it up or move it in a direction for them to make that decision themselves. To me, it's always better if a person leaves and it's their idea than for us to fire that person and then they're out spewing negativity about us. If they leave on their own accord, then that's that. [...] The whole "both/and" is being able to tolerate both the black and the white. Also, understand that it's probably not going to be that way forever but, for the moment, you have to do that.

Here, Brenda used the *more-than* response of *connection* to hold the tensions together in a dynamic interplay. She used the color contrast "black and white" to point out that some experiences, such as her situation with the employee, should not be perceived through *either-or* terms. Where the colors "black" and "white" signify distinct oppositions, Brenda "tolerated the black and white" and held the tensions together in connection by remembering the impermanent nature of things.

From Brenda's view, what appeared to be an *either-or* dichotomy at one time, revealed itself as a *both-and* situation, at a later time. By believing that a solution would surface, and holding off from making an impulsive decision, Brenda strengthened her awareness of nonduality. In the end, Brenda's employee chose to leave on her own accord. Brenda approached this set of paradoxical tensions with the philosophy of

paradoxical thinking, and then she created *connection* by allowing time to unfold and remembering the mindfulness-based notion of impermanence.

Paradoxical thinking & dialogue. *Paradoxical thinking* was also discussed in conjunction with the *more-than* concept of *dialogue*. When I spoke with Janet, the head of nursing at a unionized hospital, she was in the midst of contentious union negotiations that she felt to be contradictory. In fact, Janet was about to engage in a formal negotiation right after our interview. When I asked her where she believed the tensions arose, she told me that her staff held starkly different views from one another regarding their professional status, responsibilities, and protections. Some of her staff perceived themselves as "professionals with a practice," and expected a certain autonomy. Others, however, viewed their job as "labor work," and expected to be protected accordingly. This contradiction caused paradoxical tensions, delayed negotiations, and a seemingly unsolvable solution. Reflecting on this tension, Janet admitted,

> My vision is to give nurses a voice in a different way. Let's develop a climate where you're professionals with a practice. For some, that might have been too much too soon. It could be that the Union has felt, and I've heard this, a little less relevant when we stood up Nursing Professional Governance.

When I asked Janet how she believed the tensions would play out, she insisted that "they *can* coexist. There's so many angles and perspectives." Here, Janet employed *paradoxical thinking* as an overarching philosophy. One way that Janet enacted this philosophy was through regular meetings where she and her staff engaged in open *dialogue*. She shared, "We're starting to bring people together to say, 'What are you

experiencing? What has this meant for you personally?'" Although Janet was still working to find a solution when we spoke, she believed it was possible. She made sense of the tensions as able to "coexist," and, through *dialogue,* she was working to find a way to make sense of this coexistence for herself, her faculty and nursing staff.

Paradoxical thinking & reflexive practice. Like many of the other *more-than* concepts, *reflexive practice* was also discussed alongside *paradoxical thinking.* In her prior role as dean of the nursing college, Iris was often tasked with the responsibility of promoting inclusion and access while simultaneously increasing the program's reputation for excellence. As a long-time meditator, Iris was well-practiced in allowing uncertainty and complexity. Reflecting upon her experience managing the paradoxical tensions of access and excellence, Iris provided a recommendation for making sense of the situation.

> I think the first thing is to assess the situation, so find out, "*Where* is the tension?" and then [really] understand and hone in further on, "*Why* is this a tension?" [...] Often, [what] I like to advise people is, "Can you put *and* in here instead of a *but* or an *or*? Can you have "access *and* excellence" instead of "access *or* excellence," in my example? Putting out, "What would happen if we could have both of these things at the same time?" And then through working toward that.

Here, Iris demonstrated *paradoxical thinking* through her substitution of "and" in place of "but" or "or." She also engaged in *reflexive practice.* By considering the grounds for the tension (*Why* is this a tension?), and where it is located (*Where* is the tension?), Iris brought dialogic and spatial awareness to the paradoxical tensions that were conceptually contradictory, yet perhaps commensurable in the material world. Iris' *reflexive practice*,

as well as her substitution of the word "and" in place of "but," is an example of *discursive consciousness* (Giddens, 1979; 1984), as taken up in the constitutive view of paradox (Putnam et al., 2016). Specifically, Iris used communication to self-reflexively deconstruct conceptual contradictions. In addition to *paradoxical thinking,* participants also made sense of paradoxical tensions through the *both-and* response of *integration and balance*, and similarly incorporated *more-than* responses alongside *integration and balance.*

Integration and balance. As noted in the literature review, the technique of integration and balance is about compromising or walking a middle (balanced) line. Mary, the co-founder of a mindfulness education program recently felt pushed and pulled between balancing productivity with a looming time constraint. Mary and her team were building a smartphone application for their program. The application was taking longer than expected, and Mary's team did not feel that they could accomplish their goals with efficiency and quality in the time allotted. Reflecting on this experience, Mary shared,

> I think that when I leaned into the curiosity and the permission to be naive, it held the frustration well enough for me to be engaged then, and just kind of offer up a middle path, or what I thought might be a middle path.

Mary used the metaphor "middle path" to depict her process for traveling from where she was (the unfinished product) to where she wanted to arrive (the finished product). A "path" represents a way to get from one place to another; to journey from the start of something to the end of it; to travel along a course to a particular destination. A *middle* path may be one that sits between the fast highway and the unpredictable country road—a

frontage road, perhaps. While a frontage road does not allow for highway speed, it's not likely to halt the trip altogether with unanticipated blockages or unmarked twists and turns. A middle path, like a frontage road, is reliable and steady. A "middle path" path also mirrors the mindfulness concept of "middle way," in which contradictory tensions (e.g., goals and non-attachment) are considered in coexistence (Kornfield, 2003; Wright, 2017).

Integration and balance & reflexive practice. In the example above, in order to create a middle path, Mary engaged in *reflexive practice* with her team members. To do this, Mary first openly communicated her own naivete about the application development process. By vulnerably admitting her lack of knowledge in this area, she created a context for questioning based in curiosity (as opposed to judgment or skepticism). Next, Mary engaged in reflexive questioning with her team by asking them, as a group, which components of the application were necessary functions, and which could be set aside for version 2.0.

Before doing this reflexive practice, the team was approaching *all* functions as if they were required for the launch. However, after engaging in reflexive practice, Mary's team was able to distinguish the core functions of the application from the desired functions—and therefore work more efficiently. Consequently, Mary's team accomplished the application with quality, while also launching it in a timely manner. Mary's use of the metaphor "middle path," as well as her open communication about her naivete, reflected a discursive consciousness of the situation, her relationship to it, and the evolving options for action. For Mary, the middle path was to focus on certain key

aspects of the application, while setting aside the more sophisticated features for the time being.

Other participants also depicted *integration and balance* and *reflexive practice.* Like Mary's "middle path," Marcus, the manager of operations at a crisis counseling center, recommends looking for a "middle ground" to make sense of the situation. For example, Marcus recommended, "When you're looking through these options, you feel like they're mutually exclusive. [Ask yourself], 'Is there any middle ground into this?'" Marcus claimed that by engaging in self-questioning, instead of taking directives at face value, creative and nondualistic alternatives may arise.

In the above section, I described the ways that participants engaged in both *both-and* and *more-than* approaches to paradoxical tensions. In general, *paradoxical thinking* served as the core philosophy that underpinned many of the *more-than* responses. Participants used several *more-than* responses alongside *paradoxical thinking*, including *reframing, transcendence, connection, dialogue,* and *reflexive practice,* alongside *paradoxical thinking* to make sense of the tensions. Participants also used the *both-and* response of *integration and balance,* alongside *reflexive practice,* to make sense of paradoxical tensions.

Throughout, participant's mindfulness informed their use of these various approaches, including nondualistic thinking, comfortability with uncertainty, and impermanence. In the next section, I describe the second major way that participants' made sense of paradoxes: *emotional awareness through discursive consciousness.*

Practicing Discursive Consciousness of Emotion

When exploring the way mindfulness informs how leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions, a second major theme that emerged was *discursive consciousness of emotion*. Discursive consciousness is the ability to describe what is happening in the unfolding of it, and then reflect on why it is happening (Giddens, 1979; 1978). Discursive consciousness reflects a central element to mindfulness practice: the ability to practice self-awareness (Vyner, 2019) and to label experiences as they arise (Baer et al., 2006). Findings demonstrate that participants practiced a discursive consciousness to identify and explore their present-moment emotion state(s). Most often, participants enacted this discursive consciousness of emotion in the form of *intra*personal reflexive self-questioning across one or more of the following experiences:

(1) noticing physical sensations

(2) recognizing "triggers"

(3) labeling nuanced emotions and then exploring them deeper for the root cause

During each of these experiences, participants used intrapersonal self-questioning to identify when emotions were present, discern which emotions were present, understand why the emotions were present, and assess the utility of negative emotions. Results of my analysis suggest that by turning inward in this way, participants created agency in response to the tensions. In the following section, I describe the ways participants made sense of paradoxical tensions by practicing discursive consciousness of their emotions, beginning with *noticing physical sensations.*

Noticing physical sensations. Repeatedly, participants described becoming aware of their physical sensations and then linking those sensations to concurrent emotions. For example, Peggy, senior partner at a mid-sized law firm, recently felt torn between whether or not to promote a junior lawyer to partner. On one hand, the junior lawyer was highly competent. On the other hand, Peggy felt she would have to give up some control and financial remuneration if this lawyer became a partner. Peggy told me,

> I didn't stay in the paradox long. I just noticed, and I think this is because of the mindfulness practice, I noticed that I had this kind of reaction and I thought, "Huh, isn't that interesting?" It wasn't like I spent days or weeks or months anguishing over it.

When I asked her what reaction she was talking about, she replied, "A clutching. Like a clutch, a clutch like a little tightening of the body." Like a clutched fist, Peggy's emotions felt tight and inflexible. However, after noticing her physical sensations of "clutching," Peggy was able to pull back a bit and engage in reflexive intrapersonal communication by thinking, "Huh, isn't that interesting." Later in our interview, Peggy expanded on her practice of self-reflexive intrapersonal communication when she described an uncomfortable meeting that she recently participated in.

> I recently had to go to a meeting that was—I knew going to be very uncomfortable. Because of my mindfulness practices, I dropped into this witness state, where I was really very conscious of, "My heart's really beating. Faster than normal." I was able to observe myself observing myself. [...] I was noticing how grateful I was, actually, that I could pull back and go, "Okay, my heart's really

beating… my mouth is dry… I feel jittery. Is this a necessary response right now? Is it really going to be that confrontational? Maybe you can quiet down a little bit here." Taking myself by the hand like you would a small child and saying, "It's okay, honey, it's not going to be that bad." It wasn't that bad. Wasn't bad at all.

By tuning into her physical sensations, Peggy gained awareness of her current emotional state, as well as her ability to witness her emotions with curiosity—as opposed to being swept away by them. Emotional awareness, without over-identification with the emotions, is a key mindfulness practice (Rogers, 2016). By observing her physical sensations as indicators, Peggy was able to engage in an intrapersonal dialogue in which she reconsidered the utility of her automatic emotional response. Peggy's awareness allowed her to question her negative assumptions regarding the level of confrontation she expected to receive. And her assumptions, it turned out, were unfounded.

When I spoke with Heidi, the radiology quality officer at a large hospital, she similarly described her practice of emotional awareness. Heidi was is in the midst of a large organizational change that caused contradictory and confusing tensions. Heidi shared with me that she was dealing with "the need for the change, but at the same time, being called to do things the same way because [the] systems haven't changed." When I asked her to recount the tension, she explained that, similarly to Leon's situation described above, her hospital was trying to transition from a quantity-based model to a quality-based model.

We've always run healthcare based on volumes, right? It's like how you run your business, the more work you did, the better your business ran, right? At the same

> time, always providing appropriate and high-quality care. But now, like the volumes are being pushed to the side and they're saying, "We just want to provide value-based care and that's how people are going to get paid in healthcare. Yet, nobody knows, first of all, what that looks like or even if you're doing it. Nobody has actually put out how that's going to be compensated, or how your business is going to stay alive.

Heidi went on to explain that this situation made her feel disempowered, frustrated, and resistant. In the midst of this change, Heidi reported to a supervisor she considered a "very difficult person." Heidi shared with me that this supervisor routinely operated from a place of blame. Heidi had come to the supervisor with an idea that was initially shot down. In response to this, Heidi practiced mindful awareness of her emotions, beginning with physical cues. Heidi told me, "I noticed how my body was responding. [Mindfulness] helped me be aware of how I was reacting with that stress, fight, flight and freeze sort of approach."

Heidi explained that her mindfulness practice helped her become aware of her "fight, flight, and freeze" responses. Her awareness of her physical sensations and communication were linked. Heidi told me that by noticing physical sensations, "[I was] able to be more mindful of how I used my words in a way that met her resistance differently, and that began to create a shift in our whole relationship." By first recognizing physical signposts of these responses, Heidi was able to identify the emotions that underpinned them. Once she identified her emotions, she was able to practice awareness of her communication with her supervisor.

Another participant, Rebecca, reflected on the tensions of balancing employee and client wellbeing at the crisis counseling center. Rebecca recommended "being aware of how you're feeling at any given moment or during any interaction." To do this, she suggested "just checking in with yourself during the day about how you feel [by asking yourself] 'Are you tired today? Are you hungry? Do you have a headache? Are you cold? Are these pants really itchy and you're getting irritable about it?'" Here, Rebecca's practice was braided with discursive consciousness.

Rebecca claimed that by tuning in to her physical sensations, and then questioning herself about the sensations, she became aware of the way her physicality affected her interactions and "professional demeanor." Importantly, Rebecca believed peoples' professional demeanor informs their ability to navigate paradoxical tensions that arise, particularly when organizational responsibilities become entrenched with emotion.

For Rebecca, this was the case when she was instructed by her boss to implement organizational practices that she believed were helpful for incoming crisis callers but harmful for call center employees. By tuning into her physical sensations, Rebecca was able to pull herself out of the tension and reassess the ways in which her emotional state constructed the tension. In the above instances, as well as many more throughout the data, participants' recognition and interpersonal questioning of physical sensations was the first step in emotional awareness. The link between emotional awareness and practicing a discursive consciousness courses throughout the data.

Recognizing "triggers." A second emotional awareness behavior that emerged was the recognition of "triggers." Participants acknowledged that their emotional reaction

to a situation often guided their perception of it, as well as their response to it. In the face of paradoxical tensions, participants' initial emotional responses were often negatively valenced. The metaphor "trigger" was used to describe uncomfortable events that caused these knee-jerk emotional reactions. Similarly to the way a pulled trigger can result in impulsive, chaotic, and at times disastrous consequences, impulsive emotional responses were framed as resulting in unproductive outcomes. Thus, participants suggested the importance of being cognizant of those first emotional responses in order to remain clear on how their actions are implicated by reflex negative reactions.

In most cases, triggering events were framed as cues that encouraged participants to bring awareness to negative emotions that may have otherwise gone undetected. Celeste, the co-founder of a children's mindfulness educational program, used the term "triggered" to describe how, in general, her mindfulness practice informs her ability to recognize triggers and then engage in intrapersonal dialogue about the utility of negative emotions.

> When I'm faced, from a leadership standpoint, with actions or behaviors that I don't like to see, that I'm triggered by, I tend to, usually pretty easily, be able to step back and breathe and just literally do many practices before I engage. I very often take a pause. I very often don't engage at the time, and maybe I'll say things [to the person I'm interacting with] like, "Let's take that together after this call. Let's talk a little bit or something." That's how mindfulness shows up for me. I find that I'm less triggered by those emotional outbursts. [...] I grew up in a big Irish family. We were always fighting about everything. Now I feel like I'm able

to really step back and notice that like, "I want to get in and fight, too," and like, "Wait a minute, that's not going to help." [laughs]

By labeling undesired events as things she is personally "triggered by" and then questioning the utility of her negative response—as opposed to believing the issue is inherently problematic—Celeste took responsibility for the emotion she experiences. As a result, Celeste assumed agency over her ability to navigate it. As is seen throughout the data, participants used internal self-talk to consider the utility of unproductive emotions in response to triggers.

Participants also used the term "trigger" to indicate their awareness of an impending problem, similar to a warning signal. Eve, the associate chair of the psychology department at a large university, recognized a trigger when she worked through the situation described earlier, in which some employees requested extra resources. In response to this, Eve shared with me,

> I noticed my emotion, I notice my irritability or whatever, my blaming and judgment [and I thought to myself], "Why are they acting like this? Why are they asking me for this? This is not reasonable. I'd never asked for this." [laughter] When I notice that I'm there, that's a trigger for me to know that, "Okay, I'm caught, I'm hooked, and I'm judging." And that's never a helpful place to be. I need to see if I can step back and breathe a little bit. Give myself a little bit of room. Not judge myself for judging, but also just not allow myself to spin-up.

Instead of responding automatically, Eve used her triggers as an opportunity to reevaluate her reaction to the tension and practice discursive consciousness via labeling her

emotions ("caught;" "hooked;" judging"). By labeling her emotions, she chose to step back and not allow herself to "spin up." By making sense of the tensions by turning her focus inward and then labeling her experience, Eve was able to perceive a novel solution. In the end, Eve provided all employees with equal monetary resources, while simultaneously providing non-financial long-term support to the employees who requested special treatment.

Practicing awareness of triggers that arise in response to perceived paradoxes was an ongoing theme throughout the data. Janet, Head of Nursing at a unionized hospital, described how she would advise a junior leader on how to deal with paradoxical tensions:

> [My] advice would be just to notice the first impression and how you're reacting, and then try to stay in touch with that. If something triggers you when you're hearing one side or the other, notice it. Again, don't judge it and just be, again, curious about it. [Ask yourself], "Why is that triggering me?" so I can be really clear on how I'm reacting to whatever's being said.

Here and throughout, participants described noticing the trigger, and then engaging in discursive consciousness in the form of intrapersonal self-questioning in order to determine the utility of their response to the trigger.

Observing emotions and exploring the root cause. Another way participants made sense of paradoxical tensions was by observing nuanced emotions and then exploring their root cause. When observing emotions, participants described the way they routinely made efforts to accurately label their emotions in order to discern nuance

between them. This labeling is another example of participants enacting a discursive consciousness.

During our interviews, after participants each described their paradoxical tensions in detail, I asked them, "In any order, can you please provide me with five words that reflect how this situation made you feel?" Most participants were able to easily identify and label emotions that were present amidst paradoxical tensions. In general, participants *first* provided negatively-valenced emotions, and only then moved on to suggest any neutral or positively-valenced emotions.

The negatively-valenced emotions that came up first included terms such as anxious, frustrated, resistant, annoyed, tense, uncomfortable, conflicted, clutched, worried, afraid, confused, unclear, struggle, resistance, rushed, perplexed, and disempowered. The neutral and positively-valenced emotions, which were typically offered only after then negatively valenced emotions, included terms such as curious, engaged, allowing, patience, self-worth, trust, letting-go, opportunity, humored, productive, optimistic, and liberated. This movement from negative to neutral and positive emotions, considered alongside participants' recurring self-reflexive questioning in regard to the utility of negative emotions, may be a result of participants practicing a discursive consciousness.

One participant, Iris, claimed that by "naming" emotions and then "sitting" with them, she was able to explore them more deeply.

> I'm able to name [emotions] and experience them and use them. Like 'perplexed' and 'uncomfortable,' I can sit with that. When I say 'sit,' I mean, like, I can be

> with those emotions in a really deep way. They really inform me, like when I'm feeling uncomfortable, then that's not a bad thing anymore. Pre-mindfulness, I might've labeled [uncomfortable] as "that's bad," or curious as "good."

Although Iris did not consider some emotions bad and some good, she did credit her ability to explore her emotions to her skillfulness in naming them. Iris shared,

> For instance, if I just say that feels "bad," like if I'm in a meeting and I feel "bad," well, that is pretty general. What is bad? Diving a little bit deeper with mindfulness, and this is a practice as you go a little deeper, [I ask myself], "What is bad?" Bad is my stomach is churning. "Well, what does that mean?" Maybe asking repeatedly, "Why, why is your stomach churning?" Maybe it's because I feel like somebody is telling me something that's not a truth, or that their verbals aren't matching their non-verbals. [...] Then when I keep diving down deeper, I just come to understand a little bit more clearly. Well, "What is that information?" Then I can ask, "Is that true?" Because it could be that it's not true. It's just my response at the moment.

Iris used the metaphor "diving down deeper" to explain her process of enacting a discursive consciousness of her emotional states. Like a deep sea scuba diver exploring the depths of the ocean, Iris understood that her surface emotions were only the beginning of what can be seen and known. And, it took "diving down deeper" to investigate what existed below her immediate, surface responses.

Like Iris, several participants reported labeling their emotions and then exploring them deeper through self-questioning. Many participants claimed that, without deeper

exploration, people are prone to get lost in their stories and ruminate. After observing her emotions, Heidi practiced intrapersonal self-questioning by asking herself, “What is so intimately bothering me about the situation? What is really making my stress so high?” She recommended “identifying [emotions] and then finding some space to choose how to then approach [them] in a way that is manageable, instead of the overwhelmness.”

Similarly, Carrie, a healthcare education consultant, reported that by observing her emotions, she is able to “ultimately see things differently.” Carrie informed me that she routinely felt stuck between different stakeholders’ needs. Carrie’s job involved training research technicians. However, she felt that administrative guidelines regularly hindered her ability to do so. She told me,

> I’ve been doing this for about three years now. The administration on our team has one vision of how this works, then there’s techs on our team who have another vision of how this works. I sit right in between them all [laughs].

Carrie continued, “There’s a whole lot of mismatch there,” and “I can come up with all kinds of emotions.” When I asked her how she deals with the tension, she explained that she practices emotional awareness in order to understand the situation more productively. She said,

> There’s a sense of at times being swallowed by a situation. You know what I mean? It’s all consuming like, ‘Oh my gosh. Is this thing never going to end and this is my life?’ This [is] getting lost in the story. [...] getting caught in a river. Mindfulness definitely gives me the rope to pull myself back out of the river again and again and sit on the bank, and observe, and not get swept away.

Carrie used the metaphor, "getting *lost* in the story" and "getting *caught* in the river" to elucidate the feeling of being trapped in an uncomfortable situation with no way out. Carrie's metaphor reflects Eve's earlier metaphor of being "caught in the trenches." By practicing mindfulness of her negative emotions, Carrie was able to "pull herself back out" onto the riverbank and observe her emotions without being "swept away" by their currents. Similarly to Peggy's description of a "witness state," Carrie's explanation of observing her emotions allowed her to create some distance from them in order to explore them deeper.

Fern, director of wellness at a large East Coast university, was recently caught in a tension regarding the termination of an employee. Fern told me that she was encouraged by her supervisor to fire the employee, but that she was really struggling with the decision. On one hand, Fern recognized that the termination was within policy. On the other hand, Fern believed that there was a human element at play, and that the employee should be allowed to stay. Ultimately, Fern chose to fire the employee. However, she felt unsettled by the way she selected one tension over the other without considering alternative options.

In observing her emotions, Fern engaged in discursive consciousness by saying to herself, 'Wow, this is really hard." She then asked herself, "What is going on? I'm feeling so agitated." Fern claimed her mindfulness practice allowed her to "feel more what was happening for me internally." Fern described gaining clarity from practicing self-reflexive questioning.

> I think some of that [emotion] was around feeling bad like I should have handled—done something different. I should have stopped this, you know? I got caught on that one for a while, and so I think just having some clarity. Yes, clearer seeing I guess of what was happening for me and I'm not sure, prior to [mindfulness], if I could have done that as well. Well, I know I couldn't have.

Similarly to Carrie and Celeste, Fern uses the term "caught" to describe how she was feeling prior to engaging in an observation-based discursive consciousness of her emotional state. Like a fish caught on a hook with no escape, participants described being caught in/on emotions until untethering themselves through intrapersonal self-reflexive questioning or labeling.

Carter, the owner of a small family law firm, also gained clarity through practicing a step-by-step process of self-reflection. When asked how he would advise someone else on how to respond to paradoxes that arise, Carter explained a four-step self-reflection process.

> [One], you need to identify first what's bothering you. Two, see if it's within your control to change it. Three, if it's not, then maybe take a look at *why* it's bothering you. Then four, see if it's still bothering you.

Carter claimed that simply by exploring why the tension is bothersome, it may no longer be perceived as bothersome. Exploring emotions for underlying causes was a major theme throughout the data.

Blaze, the program manager at a large wellness center, also used a practice for exploring her emotions, yet hers was a bit more involved. In our interview, Blaze

explained a structured process she and her sister routinely use to explore their emotions. This practice came in handy last year, when Blaze dealt with a persistent paradoxical tension. Blaze felt that she needed to delegate work tasks in order for them to be accomplished in a timely manner. However, she simultaneously felt that, in order for the work to be done correctly, she needed to do the tasks herself. As a result, Blaze was left feeling frustrated, stuck, overwhelmed, and (ironically) rather insignificant. In response to her emotions, she engaged in a regular self-reflection process grounded in discursive consciousness.

> My sister and I do this practice of, "I am feeling this because—", or "I am saying this because—". We keep going deeper, we keep repeating that line until we get to the real root of the reason why we're feeling that way. Doing these practices, too, really helps you to figure out the underlying reason why certain things were getting you.

By asking herself pointed questions that explored the root cause of her emotional response to the paradoxical tensions, Blaze was able to see that her frustration originated, not in any concrete reality, but in her *perception* of what the paradoxical tensions *meant* about her. She said,

> While I was in [the tension], your emotions get muddled. You really feel like "No, this is happening to me because I'm insignificant, or it shouldn't be happening to me because I'm better than this." There's all these other emotions that come up that aren't real [laughs], that you're making up yourself.

Here, Blaze was able to distinguish the tension (delegating versus maintaining work tasks) from her internal tension-state (frustrated, stuck, overwhelmed) from the meaning she was making about the situation ("I am insignificant"). Thus, she recognized that the emotions she felt were actually constructed from her concern for her own self-worth. This awareness prompted her to realize that some of her emotions "aren't real," and that she was "making them up" and therefore contributing to the perceived tension.

Throughout the data, it seems that mindfulness practice allowed participants to enact a discursive consciousness of their emotions in order to explore them more deeply. This deep exploration encouraged participants to distinguish paradoxical tensions from the meanings they attributed to those tensions. On the one hand, left unexamined, meanings such as "I'm insignificant" or "Is this thing never going to end?" may contribute to internal emotion states that reify or even construct paradoxes. On the other hand, by understanding paradoxical tensions by turning inward and practicing intrapersonal communication in the form of reflexive self-questioning, participants gained more agency in responding to the tensions that triggered their emotions. In Heidi's words, "once you can create that awareness, that's when the ability to make choices begins to unfold."

Participants practiced a discursive consciousness of emotions through engaging in self-reflexive questioning regarding physical sensations, triggers, present emotions, and emotions' root cause. Participants' mindfulness practice informed how they made sense of paradoxical tensions by reminding them to turn inward. By turning inward, participants were able to distinguish their emotional responses to paradoxical tensions

from the tensions themselves, thus allowing them to create agency over their experience. In the section that follows, I describe the third major way that mindfulness informed leaders' sense-making about paradox: *non-attachment.*

Cultivating Non-Attachment to the Outcome

When exploring the way that mindfulness informs how leaders make sense of paradoxical organizational tensions, a final theme that emerged was the notion of non-attachment. Non-attachment is a mindfulness-based mindset in which a person is accepting of any outcomes, instead of clinging to a particular, desired outcome (Hahn, 2017). For example, when reflecting upon tensions described above, Blaze shared with me that, no matter the outcome, she chooses to "be okay with it."

> One thing that I think I've learned from my father as a mindfulness teacher that's been so important to me is, life is a series of choices and consequences. There are good consequences, there are bad consequences, but through all the choices that we make, there has to be some consequences. Being able to weigh the consequences beforehand, no matter what that looks like, and then saying, "Well, now I know that these are the two consequences that I'll have from this choice, whatever happens from these two, I'm okay with."

Blaze's process for weighing the consequences of her choices ahead of time, and then choosing to be "okay" with whatever outcome follows, is a demonstration of the practice of non-attachment.

Harrison, the principal of an elementary school, shared a similar sentiment. Harrison explained to me that more than 70% of his day is "organized chaos." No matter

how much planning he does before he arrives to work, he never knows what he will expect. When I asked him what this "organized chaos" looked like, Harrison shared with me that, on any given day, one of his students might find out that his mother has breast cancer, while another student might mourn her parents' recent divorce, and another student's father might become enraged over his son's lost football game. During each of these scenarios, Harrison would mostly likely be involved—mediating, comforting, coordinating, or de-escalating.

Harrison's chaos frequently manifested in the form of paradoxical tensions. For example, Harrison often mediated conflicting expectations between a parent and a teacher. Because he was not able to prepare for the events of any given day, Harrison routinely practiced non-attachment by "just remembering that sometimes you're trying to control things that you don't even control, or want to control, if you really thought about it."

Jacqueline, principal at her law firm, also practiced non-attachment. Jacqueline recently dealt with a tension in which she required one of her staff members to take responsibility over something the person completely refused to do. Here, the paradoxical tensions emerged because Jacqueline prioritized both her professional and personal relationship with the employee. When I asked her how she dealt with this tension, she shared with me that she practiced non-attachment by "insisting them to do it" while also "not expecting them to do it."

> I'm trying to be respectful of the person who really doesn't feel that is something that they want to do, but while still almost insisting that they do it. And, I'm not

> expecting them to do it. When they don't, I'm going to let go of it. I've already planned it out because I know this person pretty well. It's like we're going to have a bunch of conversations. We've already had a bunch of conversations. The conversations have been pretty full and open and I've been really insistent on how important I think this is, and the other person has gone from, "I'm not doing that," to, "You do that part," to, "I hear you, don't worry about it," and I'm pretty sure where we'll land is that it just won't happen.

When I asked Jacqueline how she planned to handle the situation, she told me,

> It's going to be up to me to be gracious and complimentary of what that person offers and just know that the person is not going to offer the piece that I— Probably, is just not going to happen. By the way, this is really helpful because I'm thinking about it now in a different way.

Through discussing the situation with me, Jacqueline actually engaged in discursive consciousness of her non-attachment. Jacqueline also took responsibility for her non-attachment by saying, "It's going to be up to me to be gracious and complimentary of what that person offers and just know that the person is not going to offer the piece that I [asked of them]." Through self-reflexive communication, Jacqueline decided that she was going to be okay if this staff member chose not to complete the task. Thus, by discursively communicating about her practice of non-attachment, she made sense of the tension as somewhat more flexible than how she had originally perceived it—even just before our interview.

Nichole, the director at an organizational training company, also made sense of paradoxical tensions through a lens of non-attachment. Recently, Nichole and her co-director disagreed on whether or not to promote a junior leader. This promotion brought with it significant responsibilities. On one hand, the employee was capable and driven, and could likely handle the new responsibilities. On the other hand, the employee was fairly new, and may be too inexperienced for the job. Nichole shared with me how she practiced non-attachment and also communicated non-attachment to other employees at her company.

> I think the big thing is, at the end, not holding too tightly to one particular outcome for either of us. That's something my co-director and I always, at the end of the day, teach [other employees], to have respect for one another. One of us is going to give on it, and we'll just have to come to a decision about what makes the most sense. Then, not [hold] on to the outcome too tightly.

When I asked her how her mindfulness practice informs her approach, Nichole said,

> I think my mindfulness will be if we go in the direction that I don't think is the best way forward, how can I be supportive of it? And how can I let go of my expectation of what I think the best outcome should be? Because at the end of the day, none of these things are—I keep telling myself, the business isn't going to break based on these types of decisions.

Here, Nichole used the metaphor "the business isn't going to break." This metaphor likens the business to a sturdy object—one that can withstand being dinged with a mistake here and there. By saying "the business isn't going to break," Nichole

illuminated that, while sometimes decisions can feel incredibly important, this one decision will not have overwhelming consequences for the organization.

Several other participants cited non-attachment as a key mindset when approaching paradoxical tensions. Heidi told me that her mindfulness practice helps her in "knowing what I can control, and letting go and accepting and engaging when I can." Rebecca, director of operations at the crisis counseling center, claimed she navigates tensions by "decreasing my personal investment in the outcome" because "I can't be emotionally invested in business decisions." Lindsey, executive director at a large wellness center, said, "I think the most you can do is say what you're going to say, bring the values that you bring, and then if that doesn't work, then just back off and lead by example." Steven, director of cardiology, informed me, "I just don't hold onto things the same way I used to hold onto them." Like Steven, many participants made sense of paradoxical tensions by practicing non-attachment by letting go of what they cannot, or choose not, to control. By making sense of the tensions through a lens of non-attachment, participants cultivated an ease in approaching the tensions.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the major findings in response to *RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings indicate that participants made sense of paradoxical tensions by 1) engaging *both-and* and *more-than* approaches, 2) practicing emotional awareness through discursive consciousness, and 3) cultivating non-attachment. In the next chapter,

I discuss how participants *navigated* paradoxical tensions that arose in their organizations.

CHAPTER 7

NAVIGATING PARADOXICAL TENSIONS

This chapter will introduce the major findings in regard to *RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings suggest participants navigate paradoxical tensions by 1) taking an intentional pause and 2) practicing self-care.

Taking an Intentional Pause

When exploring the way participants navigated paradoxical tensions in their organizations, a primary theme that arose was the notion of taking an *intentional pause.* Intentional pauses are invited, temporary, and purposeful interludes in the problem-solving and/or decision-making process. When faced with paradoxical tensions, participants frequently reported resisting the compulsion to act, problem solve, or decide. Instead, they slowed down, stepped back, and took an intentional pause toward any problem-solving or decision-making. By taking an intentional pause, participants claimed that they were better able to: 1) investigate deadlines, 2) regulate their emotions and 3) consider core organizational values. Participants believed that these practices promoted better decision-making and action.

Pausing to Investigate Deadlines

When faced with paradoxical tensions, several participants discussed pausing to investigate the rigidity of taken-for-granted "deadlines." Harriet, psychiatrist and co-founder of a mindfulness education program, was recently in the process of launching a smartphone application for her mindfulness program. Her team was running out of time,

and struggling to maintain the quality of the app amidst the impending deadline. When I asked her how she managed the tension between quality and the time constraint, she said,

> Everybody wants to feel like it's an emergency. [...] And since I am a physician, I've worked in emergency rooms. I have that to contrast with, like, "No one is going to die [...] It's actually not an emergency." We joke about that with our consultant a lot when she's like really pushing us to go faster, be more aggressive. I was like, "This is not an emergency." [laughs] It may be my medical training background that allows— along with my mindfulness. Like, when you've worked with like real emergencies, like someone is going to die, then [...] this is not an emergency. [laughs]

Here, Harriet used the metaphor "emergency" to demonstrate the way that people over-analogize organizational decision-making to physical emergencies. By stating "everybody *wants to feel* like it's an emergency," Harriet pointed out the constructed nature of deadlines and highlights people's agency in responding to them. Because people "want to feel" like something is an emergency, it is their choice to feel this way that can concretize the perceived deadline. Harriet suggested that by pausing to investigate deadlines, people can become aware of the actual flexibility of most deadlines:

> I see this in my friends who are in business and like, there's this "it has to happen now" mentality which, if you really investigate that, usually it doesn't have to happen now. Sometimes it does, but not as often as people think. [...] If you're feeling really pressured, really investigate where that pressure is coming from,

and are there truly external constraints that make it as urgent as it feels? Or, is it internally-driven, either by you or your colleagues, and it really isn't as urgent?

I asked Harriet why it is important to question the firmness of deadlines. She believed people make better decisions when they are not under as much stress:

> One thing I really noticed is that when pressed to act, to make a decision, to move really quickly, I found that when I did that, the stress for our whole team went up, I don't think our decisions were as good and when we noticed that pattern, we started consciously reminding ourselves, let's slow down, take a deep breath. Let's not decide this right this minute. [...] Then it felt like we were making better decisions and we got on track very quickly after that.

Harriet claimed that, when feeling pressured to act, her team really needed to "slow down." Like a high-speed vehicle flying down the freeway, fast-paced decisions are bound to miss important signpost, fail to signal, and even cause bad accidents. By investigating deadlines, "slowing down," and giving herself and her staff more time to act, Harriet was able to make better decisions.

Another participant, Peggy, shared a similar insight. As a partner at her law firm, Peggy was often tasked with making big decisions. She also regularly advised junior lawyers on how to make good decisions. Over the years, Peggy developed a decision-making protocol based on a process of self-inquiry. Her first step was to investigate the time frame for responding:

> What I often advise, and to myself as well, is to first determine what the time frame is for you to have a response. Meaning, do you really need to make a

> decision right this minute? If you don't need to make a decision right this moment, then my recommendation is to sit with this for a little bit. Either literally, sit in meditation with it, or just percolate through your mind, body, and heart, for the next three or four hours or the next day, or whatever amount of time you are able to give to this decision or this situation.

When I asked Peggy why she recommended sitting with the decision for a while, she, like Harriet, claimed that pausing led to better decision-making:

> Often the first reactive decision that we make is not always the best one. Sometimes there's a gut thing that happens, which could be really good, but sometimes it's sort of this interplay between the gut and the head, and it's just going like, "Am I just reacting because I'm on hyper alert and I'm in this 24/7 connectivity mode and so I think I have to react in the same speed with which the message was transmitted to me?"

Peggy explained that, in today's day and age, communication happens very quickly via emails, texts, phone calls, and other online messaging. She believed this causes people to respond on "hyper alert," and "in the same speed with which the message was transmitted." Peggy pointed out that people tend to analogize human communication with the technological medium through which it is transmitted. Instead of reacting at this mechanical warp speed, Peggy preferred to slow down in order to tune into her intuition and deeper concerns.

For this reason, the second step in her decision-making process included mindful journaling.

> Let's say I'm going to put [the decision] aside and think about it overnight. If I feel the same way tomorrow as I do right now, then that's probably a pretty good decision. If, over the course of the next 12 to 24 hours, I can feel a softening of the edges, I can feel a little bit of perspective, then usually that tells me that my first impulse may not have been the best choice and I'm really glad that I took some time to reflect. [...] I journal about things. That allows my intuitive mind to come through, and sometimes when I'm writing with a pen and paper, I can access deeper concerns or feelings that are inside.

Peggy used the phrase "a softening of the edges" to describe her experience of becoming less attached to her initial decision—instead of holding tight to a rigid and unwavering conclusion. When something softens, it loses its shape a bit, and becomes more malleable and flexible.

For example, consider the difference between two precious metals: white gold and platinum. White gold is more firm, and is less likely to be scratched and scraped. It holds its shape, and withstands everyday wear and tear. However, it is also more brittle and can break under force. Platinum, on the other hand, is softer and more scratchable. It is easier to scrape and dent, and it can even be bent. However, platinum is not likely to snap or break under pressure—it simply moves around the pressure. This is why white gold wedding rings often have platinum prongs: it is the softness of platinum that resists being snapped and confidently secures the diamond. Like these precious metals, Peggy experiences both hard and soft decisions. By taking an intentional pause, she is able to

choose between holding tight to a rigid verdict, or allowing for a "softening of the edges" in order to shape her decisions to her intuitive mind and deeper concerns and feelings.

Although many participants discussed the benefit of slowing down, some participants discussed what happens when they *do not* allow time to take an intentional pause. In the previous chapter, I described the way Fern, director of wellness at a large East Coast university, was caught in the tension of deciding whether or not to terminate her employee. Unfortunately, due to pressure coming from her superior, Fern did not slow down in order to give herself the time that she needed. She told me,

> I felt like a freight train came through and it was driving this initiative and I was just caught up in it. To be able to be like, "Wait a second." Just to be able to slow that down a little would have been really beneficial to me, but I think that's true anytime, you know? You see more options I think.

Ultimately, Fern fired the employee per her supervisor's recommendations. Fern likened her emotional response to the tensions to a "freight train" that she was "just caught up in." Unlike passenger trains, which are comfortable and secure, freight trains are expeditious, difficult to slow, and unsafe for human transport. Fern felt like she was being driven along, at high speeds, by something that she couldn't slow down. In the end, Fern was dissatisfied with how the decision played out, and she wished she had investigated the timeframe for decision-making in order to think it through.

The desire to slow down unproductive fast-paced decisions permeated the data. Dave, the CEO of an organization from the Fortune 500, claimed that most organizations

avoid dealing with paradoxical tensions by making fast, incremental decisions. He shared with me,

> The easiest way for organizations to make decisions is to make that incremental decision. To increment from where you are, what is called [...] "Rapid incrementalism." It's a mode in which most organizations function. They think if they go faster, they can beat disruption. And it's just so wrong.

Here, Dave suggested that organizations often make decisions for the sake of progress under the pretense that, by doing so, they can avoid "disruption." However, Dave claimed that this "rapid incrementalism" is actually a fallacy and that going faster does not lead to better decisions.

Throughout the data, numerous participants claimed that by slowing down, questioning the rigidity of assumed deadlines, and not making a decision right away, they were able to make better decisions. In fact, one participant, Angela, intentionally substituted the term "timeline" for "deadline" in an attempt to reframe the way her employees make sense of projected due dates. She claimed that "deadlines" are constructed concepts, and that the word "timeline" better reflects the reality of deliverables and expectations. From the data, it appears that one of the benefits of slowing down is emotional regulation. In the section to follow, I describe the ways participants discussed how they navigated paradoxical tensions by pausing to regulate their emotions.

Pausing to Regulate Emotions

When exploring the ways participants navigated paradoxical tensions, a primary theme that arose was participants' choice to not respond right away in order to regulate their emotions. Several participants suggested that the compulsion to make a quick decision hinders good decision-making, and that by stepping back and emotionally regulating, people are able to make better decisions.

For example, Steven, the director of cardiology at a large Southwest Hospital, recalled a time when he felt pushed and pulled between competing stakeholders' demands. Half of his staff requested that their new lab be outfitted with a particular type of machinery. The other half of his staff requested an entirely different set-up. Steven felt that both were necessary for the lab to run smoothly, yet the budget only allowed for one set of equipment. When I asked him how he navigated the situation, Steven shared that he took an intentional pause before making any decisions:

> I think it's natural for most people to have a very quick reaction to something. I've gotten much better at that. Although you still feel something immediately, if I give myself a little bit of time to step back from it to absorb and think about it a little bit before I come to an immediate conclusion, my conclusion or decision tends to be a little different.

Steven claimed that while he felt an immediate emotional reaction to paradoxical tensions, he gave himself time to "absorb" the issue before attempting to problem solve. Like a sponge absorbing water, Steven allowed the issue, and his physiological response to it, to be fully present so that he could address them:

> If you say something to me that I don't like, there's a physiologic response that it'll stimulate my amygdala, I'll have an emotion that may be aggressive, or whatever, or combative with you. But, that's really only a fraction of a second, [...] that that's just an immediate reaction. Really, give it just a couple of seconds to let that pass, you're not feeling that anymore, then you can have a bit more rational thought about what that is and how to respond to it. That, to me, is something I learned and continue to practice from mindfulness.

By allowing his feelings to be present in this way, Steven cultivated an awareness of his emotions (as described in the previous chapter), and was then able to respond more mindfully.

As a doctor, Steven was attuned to the physiological responses that underlie emotional reactions. He explained that, because physiological responses are fleeting, an intentional pause is helpful in noticing and then regulating emotions in order to respond to a situation with clarity. In the end, Steven chose to outfit the lab with one set of equipment this year, and then promised to purchase a couple of the other machines in the coming years. Although Steven was not able to accomplish both requests simultaneously, he used an intentional pause to regulate his emotions in order to make the best decision he could with the information he had at hand.

One way participants used the pause to regulate emotions in response to paradoxical tensions was by "sitting" with discomfort. Participants allowed uncomfortable emotions to be present, instead of pushing them away. This discomfort usually took the form of anxiety or uncertainty. Many participants claimed that without

the ability to allow the discomfort of uncertainty or anxiety, people tend to make quick decisions in order to satisfy their emotional need for an(y) answer—even if it is not the best answer. By allowing for anxiety and uncertainty, participants claimed to be less troubled by negative emotions, and therefore less compelled to reach for an immediate conclusion.

Jacqueline, the law partner who demonstrated non-attachment when requiring her employee to complete work that she knew wouldn't get done, claimed,

> You just have to be able to sit with anxiety. That's why—when you asked me what my thoughts were, anxiety was the first one because it's like, we have to be able to sit with that, otherwise it's our driver.

Here, Jacqueline likened anxiety to "our driver." By metaphorizing anxiety as "our driver," Jacqueline illuminated the way anxiety can take the wheel, independent of the needs and desires of the person experiencing it, and determine the course of the ride. To avoid being driven by anxiety, Jacqueline recommended being able to "sit with" it. Another participant, Blaze, also used the term "sit" to suggest a productive way to navigating paradoxical tensions.

> Sit in it, be with whatever is happening fully, be engaged in it and really find out what is really happening. Don't put words to actions that aren't real, don't put words to your own emotions that aren't real, really just sit in there to understand it.

To "sit," as it is used here, depicts a person engaging in a neutral relationship with anxiety—neither pulling it closer, nor pushing it away. Like sitting on a bench next to

someone and looking outward, sitting with uncertainty allows the person and their anxiety to coexist without confrontation or avoidance.

When I interviewed Kathy, the advisor to the president at a large university, she was in the middle of planning a university-wide innovation event. Kathy shared with me that she was torn between the tensions of inclusion (making sure everyone who wanted to be there could participate) and structure (creating something feasible that reflect the university's core values). Kathy told me that although it is common for people to want to feel like they are making headway with a decision, sometimes things take a lot longer than anticipated before taking form, and it is important to be able to "sit" with the uncertainty:

> I'd say, first of all, that it's going to take a lot longer than you think it's going to take if you were going to do it right. I think I would say be prepared to sit with the uncertainty and the not-knowing for a while. We all have a need to feel like we're providing structure, shape, and designing, and moving things forward, but when you're launching on something like this without a playbook, you've got to be willing to sit with the uncertainty long enough to feel like you've taken enough perspectives before you make a decision. [...] Making a decision too early just to feel like you have structure would have been the wrong thing.

Kathy suggested that providing structure to reduce uncertainty should not be the sole factor in decision-making. Instead, being able to "sit with the uncertainty and the not-knowing" is crucial.

At first blush, this allowing of discomfort may appear a bit counterintuitive in terms of emotional regulation. If a person sits with the anxiety, are they not simply experiencing more anxiety? According to participants, the reason "sitting with anxiety" actually regulates emotions is because sitting with discomfort is a *choice.* Instead of being driven by emotions, and therefore ruled by them, a person can choose to sit next to the emotions, and coexist alongside them. This choice puts them back in the driver's seat, and allows participants more control in how they relate to their emotional discomfort.

In addition to using the intentional pause to regulate emotions, participants also used the pause to (re)consider core organizational values in order to arrive at better decisions. In the next section, I describe the ways participants used an intentional pause to become attuned to core values.

Pausing to Consider Core Values

When exploring the way mindfulness informs how leaders navigate paradoxical tensions, participants also discussed taking an intentional pause in order to consider core values. Oftentimes, participants expanded their awareness of the issue at hand by stepping back from the situation in order to see the bigger vision, and remember long-term goals. For example, Hal, a leadership consultant, often felt pushed and pulled between growing his brand and maintaining anonymity and personal privacy. Hal told me that when he became impatient to solve paradoxical tensions, he experienced "force mode, a limited mindset, and a tunnel vision." He explained that, on the other hand,

> Patience allows us to slow it down, zoom out, stop forcing, see why are we getting push-pull in the first place. In taking that step to zoom out, you can elevate

yourself to that 30,000-foot view. It's key to navigating any [problem]. It slows down, it zooms out, it connects to a bigger vision of what's really going on here.

Hal used the metaphors "zoom out" and the "30,000-foot view" to describe the expanded awareness he obtained from allowing himself to pause. Like looking through a microscope, narrowing in on tensions can cause "tunnel vision." By intentionally slowing down and pulling back, Hal was able to see through a wider scope and remember the bigger vision.

Numerous participants discussed the way that pausing allowed them to see longer term views, goals, and values. One participant, Celeste, co-founder of a children's mindfulness education program, informed me that her mission statement actually states: "urgency is not a good solution." When I asked her why this was, she chuckled and said, "because sometimes we get so caught up in the moment of like, 'Oh my God, we have to get this done,' when really, we're forgetting about our longer-term views." By paying attention to long-term views, participants oriented themselves to the most important values and goals shared by the organization. Eve, associate dean of the psychology department, claimed that, by "keeping the bigger picture, I think we make better decisions." When I asked her how to stay attuned to the bigger picture, she recommended,

> You can insert some distance between what's happening at the moment and being fused with the momentary experience. Take a step back, not disconnecting, but getting a little bit of distance, [so] that you can see a wider range of options and pick among those options.

Here, Eve used the metaphor "fused with the momentary experience," to describe how people are often stuck, attached, and glued to the paradoxical tensions they experience. Eve claimed that by pausing and "inserting some distance," people can get a better view of the situation. However, Even explained that pausing for the sake of pausing is not necessarily productive. She argued the pause must be a "particular kind of pause"—one that is grounded in self-reflexivity and values. In response to my question to clarify if Eve was describing an intentional pause, she responded:

> It's a particular kind of pause. It's a pause that in some ways I will say to myself, "All right, what are my values? What are the other person's needs and values from my perspective as best as I understand? What's our long-term goal together? Do we have one? And how can we then move forward to address it?"

Here, and throughout the data, participants described how taking a pause allowed them to remember their long-term values. Randy, partner at a large law firm, discussed the organizational value of being a "team player." When faced with the tension of whether or not to overload his staff with important (yet burdensome) cases, Randy chooses to pause and not respond right away.

> Well, I think it's both a function of getting older, and I'm 53, and the mindfulness practice, and I probably more and more take a longer view and say, well, it's not that critical that I bring this case in because tomorrow we're all going to be here and it's important to get along and take the long view and be a team player.

Randy viewed his relationship with organization members as a long-term organizational value. Although cases will come and go, members of the organization may work together

for many years. In considering this, Randy chose to prioritize workplace relationships instead of rushing to simply get the work done. By taking an intentional pause, Randy, along with numerous other participants, stepped back and perceived longer-term goals and values.

When I asked Dave, CEO, how he made decisions, he told me that he asked himself one question: "Who are we serving?" This question attuned him, and his staff, to the most important values of the organization instead of getting caught in rapid, yet ineffectual, incrementalism. By keeping values at the forefront, participants were able to make values-based decisions instead of quick and impulsive decisions based on situational factors or fleeting emotional responses.

In the above section I described how, when navigating paradoxical tensions, one of the primary things participants do is take an intentional pause. Intentional pauses are *invited*, *temporary*, and *intentional* interludes in the problem-solving and/or decision-making process. By taking an intentional pause, participants claimed that they were better able to: 1) investigate deadlines, 2) regulate their emotions and 3) consider core organizational values. Participants claimed that each of these practices encourages better decision-making. In the following section, I describe the final major finding in response to *RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings suggest that when faced with paradoxical tensions, a primary responsive action is practicing *self-care.*

Practicing Self-Care

Self-care can be described as any actions that work to restore wellbeing. Similarly to taking an intentional pause—and often in conjunction with it—participants chose to engage in self-care *before* attempting to act, problem solve or make decisions regarding the paradoxical tensions. When explaining self-care, participants offered insights such as, you have to "put on your own mask first," and "you can't pour from an empty cup." Findings suggest that participants viewed self-care as a leadership capacity that allowed them to 1) restore wellbeing and 2) provide better leadership.

Practicing Self-Care to Restore Wellbeing

When participants discussed the theme of self-care, metaphors such as "recharging," "refueling," and "resetting" came up again and again. For example, Violet, the owner of a philanthropic children's mindfulness education program, regularly felt pushed and pulled between hiring teachers with the highest quality of education, while simultaneously meeting the needs of a growing urban student population. When I asked her how she navigated these tensions, she immediately pointed to her practice of self-care in order to "recharge:"

> I think at each day, I spend a lot of time in my own contemplative practice before I begin my day and before I begin to lead, both in my own home and out there at work and in my community. [...] I have various moments throughout my day where I feel I'm recharging my battery, I'm dipping in more and more. I don't have the time during the day to have an extended or devout practice, but when I need it, I'll have practice more interwoven throughout the day.

Violet explained that her ability to manage tensions, and even be a leader in her home or her larger community, was informed by "recharging [her] battery." This metaphor needs little interpretation; without her contemplative (i.e., meditation) practice, Violet would feel like a drained battery struggling to offer energy to her work or home. Similarly, Leon, the regional chief nursing officer, shared with me,

> I've always found quiet time for myself throughout the course of dealing with crazy days that I've had in all of my leadership life. I would say, even as a staff nurse in a busy emergency department or trauma center, I knew when it was time for me to just go take five minutes. I didn't call it mindfulness then, but I knew that I needed to just have a little bit of reset in order for me to be more effective.

Leon described how, no matter how busy he felt (amidst navigating tensions as the current CNO, or even as a younger staff nurse) he always took five minutes for self-care. Throughout his career, Leon made it a practice to temporarily remove himself from the situation to "reset" in order to be more effective. To reset something is to start over, to begin again, to restore. Resetting creates a freshness to experience; resetting clears the past and creates new possibilities.

Similarly to Violet's use of "recharge" and Leon's use of "reset," Heidi, head of nursing, used the metaphor "refuel" to describe the way self-care relates to better paradox management. When I asked her what advice she would give someone else regarding how to deal with paradoxical tensions that arose for them, she told me,

> The first thing I would tell anyone was to pause for a moment and to settle their mind and body and just to take a few breaths and to create some space and settle

> in. First of all, get back inside of yourself, right? Because a lot of these [tensions] pull us out. [...] There's somebody I know who has to be intensely mountain biking so that they can allow everything else to fall away and their thinking mind just relaxes. The first thing you have to always do is be aware. Be aware of what's taking your energy out and what refuels you, and then to focus on the things that refuel you.

Heidi believed that paradoxical tensions drain a person's energy, so it is important to focus on "what refuels you." This notion of pausing to "recharge," "reset," and "refuel" coursed through the data.

One participant, Daisy, described her experience of stepping away from her organization for several months in order to practice self-care and "reset." Daisy was the founder of a children's mindfulness education program that had grown rapidly over the last five years. Although this growth was exciting and rewarding, it began to feel overwhelming and even crippling at times. Daisy told me that although the organization was flourishing, "we couldn't breathe. It was like at the end of a marathon and we were just bent over." Instead of continuing to push forward amidst the growing successes, Daisy and her partner decided to withdraw, for several months, to engage in self-care.

> We made a decision, my partner, Bethany and I, to just stop for our own safety and health. Last summer, we hardly did anything but we just shut things down. We called it "slowing down to speed up." It was the best decision we ever made [...] We knew that anything was possible from what we'd done, and that if we just took a break we'd be better when we came back, and we were.

Here, Daisy used the—rather paradoxical—metaphor, "slowing down to speed up." This metaphor aligns with Harriet's earlier metaphor of "slowing down" and Fern's earlier metaphor of the "freight train coming through." When a locomotive is a whirring at warp speed, the conductor has little control over the direction of the vehicle. In order for the conductor to change directions, or even see the terrain clearly, the train has to slow down. For Daisy, "slowing down to speed up" allowed her to step back, see the progress they had made so far, and recognize a clear path forward. She shared with me,

> [Something] that was beautiful about all this, we digested everything that had happened in the four years previously, and we knew where we needed to go when we came back. It's just like meditation. You swept by and you stopped, and all of a sudden you have answers.

When I asked Daisy why "slowing down to speed up" gave her the answers she needed, she, like many other participants, turned again to the metaphor of "resetting."

> [It's like] when you go to sleep at night, that's when your body does all the fixing and repairing. That's why we have to slow down when we don't feel good, and so I knew it very well, on a visceral level, that I needed to stop because my body was not feeling good. That's just a bad sign. [Slowing down] allows us to reset the body, reset the mind.

Daisy likened her self-care to the physical restoration of a good night's sleep. By "resetting the body, resetting the mind," Daisy was able to come back to her work with purpose, clarity, and physical and emotional health.

Practicing Self-Care to Care for Others

In addition to restoring their own wellbeing, participants described self-care as a means of practicing others-centered leadership. For example, Violet explained that, as a leader, whatever she experiences internally is communicated out into the world. Thus, she believed leaders should prioritize self-care *in order* to care for others:

> If you're not at peace yourself, there's no way you can be able to share that with others. If you're someone who's angry or upset or anxious, that's what's going to ripple out no matter what, how much content or knowledge you might have or how many courses you've taken in that particular topic or otherwise. I think that finding that centeredness and finding that peace from within, to be able to share it with others. Mindfulness I really think is that art of being aware and attentive of what we need, as well as being able to honor and be able to share. And, having the care and compassion to give ourselves the permission to be human, as well as being able to share it with others.

Here, Violet continually linked *self-care* with *others-care.* She used the metaphor "ripple out" to explain how a leader's internal experience becomes manifest in their environment. Like a ripple in water, a person's emotions have the ability to expand outward and reach others. Therefore, Violet believed it that, when faced with paradoxical tensions, it is the leader's responsibility to make sure that their internal environment reflect the values they wish to impart on their organizations and larger communities.

I asked Violet what advice she would give other people—specifically people who do not meditate—regarding how to manage paradoxical tensions. Violet still

recommended self-care, in whatever form that took for the individual seeking to "recharge:"

> My guidance would be [to] find out what gives you peace, whether it's running or music or whatever your constructive outlet needs to be, and season your life with it, season your day with it, so you have and can access that peace in that centeredness, to be able to share that with others in a way that's authentic.

Here, Violet suggested that in order for leaders to access peace and centeredness, and to be able to share that peace and centeredness with their organizations, they should "season [their] life" and "season [their] day" with self-care. To season something is to bring out the flavor, nuance, and possibility of a dish. Most people do not consume their food unseasoned; however, it is possible to live a life or career this way. By seasoning one's life with a constructive outlet, they might be better able to share that energy with others. That being said, Violet did not imply that self-care should be the primary focus of each day; the seasoning, of course, should not eclipse the main dish. To Violet, appropriately seasoning one's life with self-care reflected a critical component to good leadership. Like Violet, several other participants recommended self-care as a key step in providing better leadership to others.

For example, When I asked Harrison, the school principal, how he managed paradoxical tensions that often involve his students' and their families' emotions, he claimed "self-care allows me to be able to carry those burdens." Similarly, Samantha, the director of women's studies, said, "It's important to take care of yourself, and [you] have to be healthy, yourself, before you can be an effective leader." Marcus, the Manager of

Operations at a crisis counseling center, reflected that he provides his organization with the best leadership when he cares for himself first: "I would say when my [meditation] practice is the deepest and [I'm] spending the most time on that, that's when I perform the best." And Dave, CEO, claimed, "The best way I would explain it, is mindfulness is taking care of oneself first, in order to be better prepared for taking care of others." Throughout the data, the notion of leaders practicing self-care in order to practice others-care showed up over and over again.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the major findings in response to *RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?* Findings indicate that participants navigated paradoxical tensions by 1) taking an intentional pause, and 2) practicing self-care.

Intentional pauses are invited, temporary, and purposeful interludes in the problem-solving and/or decision-making process. By taking an intentional pause, participants claimed that they were better able to 1) investigate deadlines, 2) regulate their emotions and 3) consider core organizational values. Participants believed that these practices promoted better decision-making and action.

Self-care involves any actions that work to restore wellbeing. Similarly to the intentional pause—and often in conjunction with it—participants chose to engage in self-care *before* attempting to act, problem solve or make decisions regarding the paradoxical tensions. Findings suggest that participants viewed self-care as leadership capacity that

allowed them to restore wellbeing and provide better leadership to others. In the next chapter, I discuss theoretical and practical implications, limitations and future directions.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the way mindfulness informs how leaders can make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations. In the first four chapters of this manuscript, I surveyed relevant literature on three distinct areas of study: organizational paradox, leadership, and mindfulness. This review suggested that future research would benefit from exploring the way these bodies of work may enrich one another; namely, this review revealed that the burgeoning constitutive view of paradox may benefit from further empirical investigation, and that the study of mindfulness may meaningfully inform this investigation. Chapter Five described my research design, participants, mindfulness qualification measure, interview approach, and methods of analysis. Chapters Six and Seven showcased the primary findings from my analysis. In the current chapter, I provide a summary of those findings, discuss their theoretical and practical implications, and reflect upon limitations and future directions.

Three primary findings emerged in response to *RQ1: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders make sense of paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?*: (1) engaging in *both-and* and *more-than* responses, (2) practicing emotional awareness through a discursive consciousness, and (3) cultivating non-attachment to the outcome. When leaders engaged in *both-and* and *more-than* approaches, they oftentimes did so by incorporating *more-than* responses (e.g., reframing, transcendence, connection, dialogue, reflexive practice) alongside the *both-*

and concept of *paradoxical thinking*. Furthermore, participants' use of the *both-and* and *more-than* approaches were distinctly tied with key mindfulness concepts (e.g., nonduality, comfortability with uncertainty, belief in impermanence).

When practicing emotional awareness, participants enacted a discursive consciousness through a particular type of communication: intrapersonal reflexive self-questioning. Participants practiced this self-questioning across three experiences: (1) noticing physical sensations, (1) recognizing triggers, and (3) labeling nuanced emotions and then exploring them deeper for the root cause. When cultivating non-attachment, participants chose to let go of what they could not control.

Two primary findings emerged in response to *RQ2: How does mindfulness inform the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations?*: (1) taking and intentional pause, and (2) practicing self-care. When taking an intentional pause, participants resisted the compulsion to act, problem solve, or decide. Instead, they slowed down, stepped back, and took an intentional pause toward any problem-solving and decision-making. Participants used the pause to: (1) question the assumption of deadlines, (2) regulate emotions, and (3) consider core values. Participants believed that taking an intentional pause ultimately led to better decision-making. When practicing self-care, participants viewed self-care as a leadership capacity that allowed them to (1) restore their own wellbeing and (2) provide better leadership to others. In the next section, I discuss the theoretical implications of the most consequential findings.

Theoretical Implications

My findings contribute to the literature in a variety of ways. Of the above findings, four are particularly noteworthy contributions. This study (1) empirically illustrates how higher-level, dialogic *more-than* responses to paradox may be used to accomplish *both-and* responses to paradox, (2) evidences the way discursive consciousness of emotion may generatively inform paradox management, (3) suggests the appropriateness and use of a new paradox management strategy that I term *'mindful dis/engagement'*, and (4) highlights self-care as an others-centered leadership capability.

The More-Than Approach as a Higher-Level, Dialogic, and Mindful Extension of the Both-And Framework

This study contributes to the organizational paradox literature in general, and the constitutive approach to paradox in particular, by demonstrating the value of Putnam et al.'s (2016) classification of the *more-than* approach for managing paradox. To review, Putnam et. al. (2016) theoretically conceptualized and proposed the *more-than* approach as a new "theory of tensions that differs epistemologically from either-or or both-and responses" (Putnam et al., 2016 p. 66). The authors argued that while *either-or* and *both-and* approaches aim to cope with or manage tensions, the *more-than* approach may transform and transcend tensions by "open[ing] up rather than clos[ing] off meanings and us[ing] tensions to enhance a discursive consciousness of paradoxical situations" (p. 66). In other words, in situations where we have traditionally considered paradoxes as limiting possibilities for action, the *more-than* framework may create new possibilities for action.

The current study provides further empirical evidence of the way the *more-than* approach is manifest in communication and behavior.

When participants described the ways in which they made sense of paradoxical tensions, their descriptions demonstrated various *more-than* responses, including *reframing, transcendence*, *connection, dialogue*, and *reflexive practice.* This study raises the question of whether, and in what capacity, *more-than* responses are conceptually and empirically connected with *both-and* responses. Indeed, without exception, participants' *more-than* responses occurred in conjunction with *both-and responses*—typically with *paradoxical thinking*.

Paradoxical thinking (the cognitive ability to recognize the commensurability of paradoxical tensions) aims to cultivate an openness to paradoxes. In contrast, *balance and equilibrium* (finding a compromise or "middle of the road" solution) and *vacillation or spiraling inversion* (a process of shifting back and forth between two or more poles) (Putnam et al., 2016) can close off meanings by reducing the outcomes to compromise or oscillation. In this study, although there were two instances of *more-than* responses alongside *balance and integration* (and no instances of *vacillation or spiraling inversion*), the majority of *more-than* responses occurred alongside *paradoxical thinking.*

When describing how they made sense of paradoxical tensions, participants held *paradoxical thinking*—categorized by Putnam et al. (2016) as a *both-and* technique—as an overarching philosophy ("these poles can both coexist..."), while employing *more-than* responses ("...so, I am going to reframe the situation to make it work"). In other

words, the *both-and* concept of *paradoxical thinking* was used as a guiding philosophy, and *more-than* responses were used as a means of achieving that philosophy.

Furthermore, participants' *more-than* responses (including their co-occurrence with *paradoxical thinking*) were distinctly informed by participants' discursive consciousness of key mindfulness concepts, such as nonduality, comfortability with uncertainty, and belief in impermanence (Hahn, 2017). Based on my findings, it is possible for paradoxical tensions to be alleviated by (1) maintaining a *both-and* (paradoxical thinking) philosophy, (2) supporting that philosophy with certain mindfulness concepts, and (3) employing higher-level *more-than* response strategies.

Therefore, although Putnam et al. (2016) distinguish *more-than* responses as a "theory of tensions that differs epistemologically from either-or or both-and responses" (p. 66), my findings suggest the *more-than* framework may be conceptualized as a productive and mindful way of accomplishing the *both-and* framework. In personal communications with Fairhurst (March 7, 2019), I learned that, consistent with the findings from this study, she also conceptualizes the *more-than* approach as an extension of the *both-and* framework—one that is higher-level and dialogic. The current study's findings confirm this higher-level, dialogic view, and demonstrate that responses currently associated with the *more-than* category may act as higher-level, dialogic, and *mindful* extension of the *both-and* framework—as opposed to a new paradox management category that diverges from it.

Intrapersonal Self-Questioning of Emotion as a Form of Discursive Consciousness

Historically, organizational paradox research has focused on exploring large-scale organizational systems and processes (e.g, Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), actors' cognition (e.g., Fitzgerald, 1945; Rothernberg, 1979) and meaning construction (Lüscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006; Poole, 2000). Although these approaches differ in their explanation of the construction of paradoxes, as well as their ensuing paradox management strategies, they are similar in that they generally discuss the consequent tensions (i.e., the issue that must be managed) as external to the actor.

More recently, scholars have begun to shift their focus toward the ways that organizational communication can constitute paradoxical tensions. For example, the *constitutive approach* takes a decidedly discursive view by highlighting the role of communication in constructing—and potentially deconstructing—paradoxes (Putnam et al., 2016). From this perspective, paradoxes are developmental and dynamic; they are constructed and deconstructed through ongoing organizational communication. Thus, the constitutive approach encourages researchers to analyze paradoxical tensions by exploring the way communication "surfaces in everyday practices" and then constitutes or ameliorates organizational paradoxes that arise.

Given this developmental and dynamic lens, the constitutive approach argues that by "moving discourse out of the shadows of paradox research into the foreground, organizational actors can engage contradictory forces through reflexivity and dialogic practice" (p. 68). To do this, the constitutive view suggests actors develop a *discursive consciousness.* A discursive consciousness is a particular type of awareness in which

people can observe what is happening, describe what is happening in the unfolding of it, and reflect on how and why it occurs (Giddens, 1979; 1984; Putnam et al., 2016, p. 68). Organization members are encouraged to be *self-monitors* who practice self-reflexivity of their experience in order to constructively respond to paradoxical tensions.

Curiously, the notion of a discursive consciousness reflects core components of mindfulness practice; namely, self-awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Pipe & Bortz, 2009; Vyner, 2019) and the ability to label experiences as they arise (Baer et al., 2006). However, there is currently no empirical investigation of discursive consciousness from a mindfulness-based perspective. This study puts discursive consciousness and mindfulness in conversation with one another to empirically evidence the way that mindful discursive consciousness of emotion can meaningfully inform how people make sense of paradoxes.

When faced with paradoxical tensions, participants routinely reported turning inward and practicing emotional awareness in response to uncomfortable experiences. To do this, participants practiced discursive consciousness of their emotions in the form of intrapersonal reflexive self-questioning across one or more of the following experiences: (1) noticing physical sensations, (2) recognizing "triggers," and (3) observing emotions and exploring the root cause. During each of these experiences, participants practiced discursive consciousness to identify *when* emotions were present, discern *which* emotions were present, understand *why* the emotions were present, and/or assess the *utility* of negative emotions.

By turning inward with intrapersonal self-questioning and reflection, participants created agency in responding to the tensions. Instead of perceiving the paradoxical

tensions as external phenomena outside of their control, participants turned inward and assessed their relationship to the tensions. Emotional awareness is a key aspect of mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; 2003), so it is not surprising that participants observed their emotions in response to the tensions. Furthermore, mindfulness encourages accurate labeling of one's experience, so it is also not surprising that participants reported the ability to practice communicative self-awareness.

What is interesting is the way *intra*personal reflexive self-questioning of emotion worked to ameliorate *external* tensions. Through practicing discursive consciousness of emotion, participants aimed to distinguish the facts of the situation from the meaning they were making about the situation (Kornfield, 2003; Vyner, 2019). At times, the conceptual nature of paradoxical tensions was revealed. Thus, my analysis demonstrates that it is possible to address paradoxical tensions by practicing discursive consciousness of emotions to investigate what, of the tensions, is simply an emotion-bound story that can be dissolved through deeper exploration. This contribution uniquely extends the constitutive view of paradox by evidencing at least one way actors may employ a discursive consciousness to constructively diminish paradoxes. In future work, scholars may consider intrapersonal reflexive self-questioning as a specific form of discursive consciousness when employing the constitutive view as a theoretical framework.

Overall, this study surfaces the role of emotion in paradox management by evidencing discursive consciousness of emotion as a generative and mindful paradox management strategy. This contribution is particularly interesting because, up to this point, the study of emotion has been fairly sparse in most organizational paradox research

(Fairhurst et al., 2016). Recently, however, scholars (e.g., Fairhurst et al., 2016; Schad et al., 2016) have called for further exploration of emotion. By studying the intersection of paradox, discursive consciousness, and *mindfulness,* the current study acts as an empirical exemplar that brings emotional awareness to the forefront of paradox management.

'Mindful Dis/engagement' as a Productive Paradox Management Strategy

When exploring the ways mindfulness informs how leaders navigate paradoxical tensions that arise in their organizations, a primary yet somewhat counterintuitive theme emerged: participants often took an intentional pause in the problem-solving and decision-making process. This finding is counterintuitive because it shines new light on a grouping of response patterns and defense mechanisms to paradox that in the past have been categorized as problematic.

In the organizational paradox literature, there have been numerous discussions of the ways that people problematically disengage from organizational action when faced with paradox—in the form of denial, repression (Vince & Broussine, 1996), withdrawal (Tracy, 2004), inaction, and paralysis (Smith & Berg, 1987). Taken together, these response patterns and defense mechanisms can be understood as *disengagement.* Withdrawal, for example, is a "debilitating response pattern" in which a person disengages "from all human involvement either through physical isolation or through conceptually blocking input channels of communication" (Tracy, 2004, p. 122). Withdrawal tends to reflect instances where a person perceives of organizational tensions in the most unproductive way possible: knotted and absurd paradoxes that cannot be solved or, at times, even spoken about (Tracy, 2004). When faced with paradoxical

tensions, employees may experience withdrawal to disengage and avoid the contradictions (Smith & Lewis, 2011), leading to guilt, anxiety, and inertia (Smith, 2014; Tracy, 2004). Therefore, it is commonly assumed that disengagement from paradoxical tensions is problematic for individual employees.

What's more, organizationally, disengaging from paradoxes can lead to loss of resources and reputation (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014; Smith & Lewis, 2011). For example, groups can become "paralyzed by a choice between alternatives" and therefore thrust into disengagement (Smith, 2014, p. 1594). Past literature seems to suggest that when organizations experience disengagement, they do so out of a lack of foreseeable options. In other words, people fail to act because they do not know how to act. Thus, organizations may stumble into inaction and become paralyzed in "gridlock" (Fairhurst & Putnam, 2014). Because of this, it is generally concluded that disengagement, in the various forms described above, is troublesome for organizations as well as individual employees. As such, discussions of disengagement have been quite cautionary.

Although disengaging from paradoxes has, up to this point, been associated with problematic response patterns, my findings demonstrate that a particular type of disengagement—something I am terming *mindful dis/engagement*—actually serves as a productive paradox management strategy. When participants in this study were faced with paradoxical tensions, they often choose to temporarily withdraw themselves from the situation to take an intentional interlude in the problem-solving and/or decision-making process. Unlike other forms of disengagement that are characterized by guilt,

anxiety, and inertia, *mindful dis/engagement* is characterized by choice, impermanence and intentionality.

How does this study, therefore, suggest that *mindful dis/engagement* unfolds? First, participants *choose* to disengage as a way of mindfully navigating paradoxical tensions. By choosing to disengage from problem-solving and decision-making, participants cultivate agency over their experience—instead of being thrust into inaction due to a lack of other options. It may be the agency cultivated through choice that mitigates some of the anxiety and guilt often experienced with the typically unproductive forms of disengagement described above.

Second, participants consider the disengagement to be *impermanent*, which allows for the possibility of multiple unforeseen futures. *Mindful dis/engagement* may last a few months, a few weeks, or just a few minutes. In any case, participants do not expect it to last indefinitely. Whereas typical disengagement, in the form of "paralysis" or "gridlock" for example, connotes a sticky permanence, the impermanence of *mindful dis/engagement* allows for an ongoing, evolving relationship between the individual and the paradoxical tensions.

Third, participants highlight the role of *intentionality* in *mindful dis/engagement*. *Mindful dis/engagement* is intentional in that it, somewhat ironically, serves a purpose for other types of *re-engagement*. Although *mindful dis/engagement* acts as a temporary recess for any problem-solving and decision-making, it is not a passive state. By intentionally disengaging from problem-solving and decision-making, participants create the opportunity to engage in at least three productive response patterns, including: (1)

investigating the rigidity of assumed deadlines, (2) taking actions to regulate emotions, and (3) considering core values.

By investigating deadlines, participants often recognize the socially-constructed nature of deadlines, and therefore cultivate awareness and agency in responding to these deadlines (or reconsidering them). By regulating emotions, participants gain clarity in decision-making, and the ability to not grasp for quick decisions for the sole purpose of quelling uncertainty. And, by attuning themselves to core organizational values, participants consider the "bigger picture" and are able to see the forest through the trees, so to speak. Therefore, participants believed that the ability to investigate deadlines, regulate emotions, and consider core values are critical in successfully solving problems, making decisions, and ultimately navigating paradoxical tensions. Based on my analysis, I propose including *mindful dis/engagement* as a productive paradox management strategy to be included in the organizational paradox literature.

Specifically, I recommend *mindful dis/engagement* to be included in the *more-than* framework. This is because the components of *mindful dis/engagement*—investigating deadlines, regulating emotions, and considering core values—are replete with discursive consciousness. When describing how they investigated deadlines, regulated emotions, and considered core values, participants often described the verbal experience of self-questioning (e.g., "Am I just reacting because I'm on hyper alert?"; "Who are we serving?"). When compared to all of the *both-and* responses, the discursiveness involved in *mindful dis/engagement* reflects a higher-level, dialogic and mindful approach.

When compared to *more-than* responses, the aforementioned discursiveness conceptually aligns. In fact, in many ways, *mindful dis/engagement* mirrors the *more-than* response of *reflexive practice.* However, *mindful dis/engagement* is distinct from *reflexive practice* in that it specifically highlights the role of *disengagement,* as well as the co-occurrence of *re-engagement*. Therefore, the current study proposes that *mindful dis/engagement* be included in the *more-than* framework as a specific *more-than* response.

Self-Care as an Others-Centered Leadership Strategy

When exploring how mindfulness informs the way leaders navigate paradoxical tensions, many participants discussed the importance of *self-care* before attempting to solve the problem. Self-care allowed participants, as they put it, to "recharge," "refuel," and "reset." By practicing self-care, participants claimed to (1) restore their own wellbeing, and (2) provide better leadership to others. Therefore, in addition to being a method for navigating paradoxical tensions, participants routinely described self-care as a critical aspect of others-centered leadership.

Many others-centered leadership approaches—including *transformational leadership* (Bass & Avolio, 1994)*, authentic leadership* (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and *servant leadership* (Greenleaf, 2002), for example—are primarily concerned with shining light on the needs of organization members. However, my analysis suggests that it is sometimes beneficial for leaders to focus on their own needs first, particularly in the context of complex problems. When faced with a paradox, practicing *self-care* can help

people restore their wellbeing in order to have more energy to give to the situation and others involved.

While there are a few studies that explore self-care as a leadership strategy, they stem from the field of nursing (Brown, 2009; Pipe & Bortz, 2009; Wicks & Buck, 2013). These studies demonstrate the value of self-care for strengthening leaders' resilience. However, the current studies fail to capture the ways in which organizational communication may inform, and be informed by, leaders' practice of self-care in the context of others-centered leadership or paradox.

The current study integrates self-care into the field of organizational communication in general, and the study of organizational paradox in particular, by demonstrating the way that self-care acts as a key others-centered strategy for leaders to use when navigating the complicated terrain of paradoxical tensions. More work can be done to integrate self-care into others-centered leadership theory, particularly in the organizational communication and management fields.

The above discussion offers the primary theoretical contributions of this research. This study (1) empirically illustrates how higher-level, dialogic *more-than* responses to paradox may be used to accomplish *both-and* responses to paradox, (2) evidences the way discursive consciousness of emotion may generatively inform paradox management, (3) suggests the appropriateness and use of a new paradox management strategy that I term *'mindful dis/engagement'*, and (4) highlights self-care as an others-centered leadership capability.

Practical Implications

The findings from this research suggest that it would benefit organizational scholars, leaders, and practitioners to reconsider a few common assumptions about awareness, disengagement, mindfulness, emotion, and self-care in problem-solving and leadership practices. To this end, two primary practical implications for leadership developed from this research. They are: (1) in response to complex problems, leaders could benefit from de-rationalizing problem-*solving* to incorporate emotion-based problem-*navigating* into their strategic repertoire, and (2) leaders could benefit from building *mindful dis/engagement* and *self-care* into their organizational protocol.

Augmenting Problem-*Solving* with Problem-*Navigating*

Leadership theories have, historically, prioritized rationality over emotionality (Yukl, 2013). However, as leadership theories have evolved to encompass an array of co-elevating models, such as transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002), and authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), emotion may be moving to the foreground.

The current study additionally demonstrates that leaders can valuably benefit from augmenting rational notions of problem-*solving* with emotion-based problem-*navigating.* This may be particularly true when faced with complicated, paradoxical and multiplex problems such as those described throughout this manuscript. To implement, organizational leaders might incorporate emotional problem-*navigating* into existing notions of rational problem-*solving.* Leaders can valuably encourage employees to

practice a process of emotional awareness, including (1) noticing physical sensations, (2) recognizing triggers, and (3) exploring emotions deeper to determine the root cause.

One way leaders could incorporate this model into organizational protocol is through structured meetings that (1) present a problem to be tackled, and then (2) ask participants to engage in intrapersonal reflexive self-questioning in response to their emotions across the aforementioned process. By tackling problems in this way, leaders and organization members may more clearly distinguish the problem from the meanings they make about the problem, ultimately leading to more awareness in how to move forward.

Building Mindful Dis/engagement & Self-Care into Organizational Protocol

Although disengagement has, up to the point, reflected problematic response patterns to organizational tensions, the current study demonstrates that leaders and organizations could benefit from building mindful disengagement into organizational protocol. *Mindful dis/engagement*, characterized by choice, impermanence and intentionality, allows leaders to challenge "rapid incrementalism," a mode of operating in which organizations make "progress" for the sake of progress, without clarity about where they are going, who they are serving, and why they are moving in a certain direction. By mindfully disengaging, and "leaving space for innovation," as one participant put it, leaders and organization members are more creative, energetic, and productive.

By mindfully disengaging from problem-solving, decision-making, or working toward solutions, organizations may experience a "softening of the edges," whereby new

possibilities and opportunities become visible. One way leaders could build *mindful dis/engagement* into organizational protocol is by making it a daily or weekly practice.

This practice may coincide well with self-care. For example, leaders could enact a policy that sets aside specific time during the day for employees to take a walk outside, listen to music, journal, or meditate—to name just a few practices. Leaders could encourage each other and organization members to take time to investigate deadlines, engage in self-care practices that help "recharge, refuel, reset," and emotionally regulate, and reconsider core organizational values. By building *mindful dis/engagement* and self-care into organizational protocol, leaders can take (albeit counterintuitive) strides toward better leadership, problem-solving, and progress.

Although mindfulness may inform productive strategies for making sense of and navigating paradoxes, it is also important to remain aware of the potential problems with prescribing mindfulness in organizations. Some scholars argue that mindfulness, as it is being integrated and explored in Western society, has been stripped of its ethical philosophical foundations and therefore vulnerable to misappropriation (Purser & Milillo, 2014). Unexamined, top-down mindfulness (e.g., directives for employees to "just accept things as they are" or "take full responsibility for your inner experience") may reproduce institutional power, pacify employees, and maintain toxic organizational environments (Purser & Milillo, 2014).

Therefore, it is important for leaders to invite and encourage mindful practices, as opposed to mandating them. One way leaders may do this is by using inviting language (e.g., "I invite you to take part in this exercise"). In addition, leaders' actions, practices

and policies should reflect this inviting dynamic. Here, intention and attention are key (Shapiro et al., 2006). In order to incorporate mindfulness in a way that is humanistic and ethical, leaders should remain specifically attuned to the wellbeing of the organization members—not just the bottom line.

Limitations & Future Directions

This study has a few limitations to note, including (1) a sole focus on leaders who practice mindfulness without an empirical comparison to leaders who do not practice mindfulness, (2) the majority of participants are female, and (3) findings are based on interviews and self-report data, with no observational data.

Regarding the first limitation, I chose to focus solely on leaders who practice and score high on trait mindfulness in order to understand how their experience of mindfulness informs the way they make sense of paradoxical tensions. However, by only studying leaders who practice and measure high on mindfulness, the question arises regarding whether their experiences are vastly different from other leaders, particularly other "good" leaders, who do not formally practice or measure high on trait mindfulness.

Although this comparison is not necessary to determine how the leaders who practice and score high on trait mindfulness make sense of and navigate tensions, it would be valuable to determine if their experience is a reflection unique to their mindfulness. Initial analysis suggests no obvious differences between the three participants who failed to complete the FFMQ and those included in the study. Regarding the one participant who scored below the midpoint on the FFMQ, I hesitate to draw conclusions from this one discrepant case. Therefore, future research should explore the

way that leaders who do *not* practice mindfulness (and/or who score low on trait mindfulness) make sense of and navigate paradoxical tensions that arise, and then compare their sense-making and navigation strategies to the findings demonstrated in the current study.

In regard to the second limitation, of the 38 leaders included in this study, 28 participants were female and 10 participants were male. This gender difference is noteworthy given the leadership context of the research. This female majority may be explained by the mindfulness-based focus of the study. In general, common conceptualizations of mindfulness promote characteristics that are typically categorized as feminine, such as compassion, empathy, and mindful listening. Although no obvious gender differences emerged in my analysis, I did not specifically compare women's and men's responses. More research is necessary to determine if any differences emerged in how female and male participants conceptualized mindfulness, paradox, and/or leadership. More research is also necessary to determine if the female majority informed the findings in a meaningful way. Future research should explore a sample with the same number of female and male participants.

Finally, the current study's findings are based on interviews and self-report data. Although interview data is excellent for illuminating the way participants make sense of their experience, interviews fail to capture the nuances of dialogue, gestures, and timing that emerge in present-moment communication and interactions. Therefore, future work would benefit from including observational data, such as shadowing leaders, sitting in on meetings, or even role playing.

A Note on Mindfulness

I began this project with a deep curiosity about mindfulness. In order to explore mindfulness academically, it was essential for me to transcend my own either/or thinking regarding spirituality and science. I needed to untether my conceptual categories that distinguished the two. To do this, I engaged with spirituality and science in a way that braided the two together and transformed my understanding of them: To become acquainted with mindfulness, I studied *and* I meditated. To develop theory, I called upon objective *and* subjective insight. To understand the deeper philosophies, I turned to scholars *and* monks.

As a result, I learned that wisdom has a remarkable way of commensurating itself across disciplines and philosophies. I learned that mindfulness—which allows us to be aware of our own awareness, and draw wisdom from that meta-awareness—is both one of the most simple and most extraordinary human abilities. I also learned that awareness begins with a *pause*. To conclude this project, I leave you with an excerpt from one of my favorite authors I encountered on this journey:

Tara Brach on 'The Sacred Pause'

In our lives we often find ourselves in situations we can't control, circumstances in which none of our strategies work. Helpless and distraught, we frantically try to manage what is happening. Our child takes a downward turn in academics, and we issue one threat after another to get him in line. Someone says something hurtful to us, and we strike back quickly or retreat. We make a mistake at work, and we scramble to cover it up or go out of our way to make up for it. We head into emotionally charged confrontations

nervously rehearsing and strategizing. The more we fear failure, the more frenetically our bodies and minds work. We fill our days with continual movement: mental planning and worrying, habitual talking, fixing, scratching, adjusting, phoning, snacking, discarding, buying, looking in the mirror. What would it be like, right in the midst of this busyness, we were to consciously take our hands off the controls? [...] What if we were to intentionally stop our mental computations and our rushing around and, for a minute or two, simply pause and notice our inner experience?

A pause is a suspension of activity, a time of temporary disengagement when we are no longer moving toward any goal. [...] We stop asking "What do I do next?" The pause can occur in the midst of almost any activity and can last for an instant, for hours, or for seasons of our life. We may take a pause from our ongoing responsibilities by sitting down to meditate. We may pause in the midst of meditation to let go of thoughts and reawaken our attention to the breath. We may pause by stepping out of daily life to go on a retreat or to spend time in nature or to take a sabbatical. We may pause when we feel suddenly moved or delighted or saddened, allowing the feelings to play through our heart. In a pause, we simply discontinue whatever we are doing—thinking, talking, walking, writing, planning, worrying, eating—and become wholeheartedly present (Brach, 2003, p. 51).

And then, we breath.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarized the primary theoretical contributions of the study. First, this research supports the value of the *more-than* framework and demonstrates how

higher-level, dialogic, and mindful *more-than* responses to paradox may accomplish both-and responses to paradox. Second, this study brings emotion to the forefront of paradox management by evidencing how discursive consciousness of emotion, in the form of intrapersonal reflexive self-questioning, may serve as a generative paradox management strategy. Third, this study proposes the concept of '*mindful dis/engagement*' as a productive approach paradox management. And four, this study conceptualizes self-care as an others-centered leadership strategy. Taken together, these theoretical implications suggest that leaders can meaningfully reconsider a few common assumptions about awareness, disengagement, emotion, self-care, problem-solving, mindfulness, and most notably, organizational paradox.

EPILOGUE

Curiously, the insights gained from this research are not restricted to organizational paradox alone. Approximately two months before this manuscript was due, I found myself with a new habit: every few mornings or so, around *four a.m.*, I would find myself lying awake, staring at my ceiling, and mentally organizing—and reorganizing—chapters of this study. The first time it happened, I blamed my ill-timed 6pm latte. The second time it happened, I blamed my dog's snoring. The third time it happened, I (naturally) blamed myself.

Not only did I blame myself for stressing, but I blamed myself for being the kind of person who stresses out while researching *mindfulness*. The irony compounded the problem and, before long, these four a.m. planning/stressing/blaming sessions became *three a.m.* planning/stressing/blaming sessions. And, the harder I tried to fall back asleep, the more awake—and frustrated—I felt. I was, as several of my participants put it "hooked; caught; judging."

Although I did not classify my new problem as a "paradox" in the formal sense of the word, I certainly considered it a puzzle: I was awake because I was stressing about work. However, I needed to get some sleep in order to accomplish my work with quality. On top of this, I felt ridiculous for being in this predicament in the first place. I study *mindfulness*, after all.

What to do?

During the third week of this nonsense, it dawned on me… *Perhaps I should practice the insights that were emerging in my study.* At the best, applying these insights

would help. At the worst, my experience might serve as a negative case for my evolving analysis. What did I have to lose? I was already losing sleep!

The next time I found myself lying awake, staring at my ceiling, and mentally organizing subheading #6 of my literature review, I got up, and I went into my office. I sat down at my desk, and I took a breath. Then another one. Then another one.

Step one: mindful dis/engagement (regulate emotions & investigate deadlines)

I said to myself, "I'm just going to stop fighting it. I'm not going to *try* to fall asleep anymore. Trying is *not* working. Instead, I'm going to take a pause and just sit in this muck. I don't care if I sit here for an hour," I told myself, "I've already been up for two!"

Step two: discursive consciousness (identify present emotions)

After a few minutes of just sitting and breathing, I said to myself, out loud, "I am feeling incredibly anxious."

Breath.

"I am feeling tight and jittery at the same time."

Breath.

"I am feeling like I want to work, but I'm too tired to."

Breath.

"I am feeling stressed out."

Breath.

After walking myself through this process verbally, something released a bit. 'Speaking the awareness' allowed me to absorb my anxiousness in all its glory, and also recognize that some of my fretting was unnecessary.

Step three: discursive consciousness (explore emotions for root cause)

By talking through my emotions, I noticed that my stress about the dissertation was heavily exacerbated by my desire to fall asleep. Once I became conscious of this, I decided that it was in my best interest to stop worrying about the less pertinent sleep issue. Losing a few hours of slumber, here and there, was no big deal compared to completing a Ph.D.

Edges softened. Clutching released. Judging pulled back. It was working.

I took a breath.

After deciding that I would let go of grasping at sleep, I gave myself permission to feel nervous about the dissertation. I said to myself, "You know what? I'm actually *justified* in feeling nervous about my study. *Anyone* in my position might feel this way. Writing a dissertation *is* stressful." Once I remembered that I was probably quite normal, I stopped criticizing myself for being the "kind of person" who stresses out while studying mindfulness.

Aha! I just navigated the second issue. No more worrying about sleep, *and* no more worrying about how inappropriate my stress was. At that point, I had effectively diminished two of the three issues at hand.

Edges softened more. Clutching released more. Judging pulled back more.

I took a *big* breath.

This time I was smiling. Had a fly on the wall been observing all of this, I would have probably looked rather nutty. For three weeks prior, my only path had been to *try, try, try* to stop stressing, to get over my jitteriness, and to fall back asleep. That path had failed me miserably.

But as I sat there in my office, in the wee hours of the morning, I practiced another way out. I used *mindful dis/engagement* and discursive consciousness of emotion as an active practice. I used my own findings to address the issue at hand. How thrilling!

Step four: mindful dis/engagement (consider core values).

Next, I asked myself a key question: "What are my core values?" My core values involved writing a quality dissertation that had the potential to make an impact. Given this goal, was lying awake at three a.m. useful? Was it going to help me achieve my goal?

I made myself say it out loud. "This stress might be *justified*, but is it *useful*?"

Of course, my answer was no.

A little bit of stress *might* be useful when determining how many hours to set aside for writing each next week (advice: always allow some wiggle room). A little bit of stress might also be useful when deciding whether or not to begin writing early (advice: always begin early). However, untethered stress, no matter how you slice it, was certainly *not* useful between the hours of three and five a.m. when sleep was in order.

Stressing at three a.m. was not going to help me get quality work done the next day when it mattered. Stressing at three a.m. was not going to magically transform my dissertation by sunrise. Stressing at three a.m. was not even going to make me breakfast.

I said it again, "Although this stress might be *justified*, it is not *useful*."

After repeating those words out loud, I noticed I was nodding my head slightly. With each nod, a growing spark of insight filled my head, my heart, and eventually my whole office.

My nervous jitters were replaced with excited jitters. *Although this stress is justified… it's not useful.* My emotions and rationality finally synced up. Up to that point, although I knew, mentally, that I should have gone back to sleep hours ago, I just couldn't get there emotionally.

However, by mindfully disengaging from the goal of sleep, and then practicing a discursive consciousness of my emotions, I was able to align my heart with my head and come to the *only* conclusion that made any sense on both a rational and emotional realm: go back to sleep, Sophia.

And that is what I did. It was glorious.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE, VERSION A - PARADOX FIRST

Opening Questions

1. Please describe your role at your current employment.
    a. Would you consider that to be a leadership position?

2. In your opinion, what is the most important thing for you to have for "good" leadership?

Paradox Questions

3. An important topic in today's leadership research is how leaders manage opposing tensions in their workplace. Can you tell me about a specific time at work when you felt pushed and pulled between two or more goals that competed with one another?
    a. Can you name the tensions or goals pulling you in different directions?
    b. Can you break this down into parts/sequence (e.g., when it first started)?
    c. How did you work through the situation?
    d. Did you have any conversations around this topic? What did you say? What can you recollect from that?

4. This is a word association question. In any order, please provide me with 5 - 8 words that reflect how the situation made you feel.
    a. You have identified (list the words they provided). Did mindfulness have an impact on your ability to manage these emotions?
    b. Can you explain?

5. (If they talk about the pause…)
    a. What does the pause provide/allow you?
    b. Are you using this "pause" to work through or regulate emotions?
    c. Is there anything else that the "pause" allows for? What happens during the pause?

6. If you were to instruct a friend — who knows *nothing about mindfulness* — on how to deal with opposing goals or tensions that arise in *their* organization, walk me through what you might say to them.

OR:

7. I'm going to have you role-play with me for a second. Imagine that I am one of your direct reports at a large organization. My job is to lead our company's marketing department, and my department is struggling. Recently, I've found

myself dealing with an unsolvable problem, so I'm coming to you for advice. I say:

"_____, I'm struggling. Our department has conflicting demands that both need to happen ASAP in order for us to do our job and stay afloat. We need to expand our headcount significantly, while also cutting our costs significantly. And, for us to be successful (or even survive) both of these things need to happen ASAP. I have considered this issue from every angle, and there's really no way to effectively do both at the same time. What should I do?"

Mindfulness Questions

8. Think about a specific time when you were aware of your mindfulness practice showing up in the way you were at work, specifically in regard to your communication or interactions.
    a. Can you set the scene for me?
    b. Can you locate the mindfulness in that interaction? Where did it show up for you?

9. What does mindfulness mean to you?

10. If you could wave a magic wand and forever be perfectly mindful, what would this look like in terms of your leadership?

11. Did you ever hold a leadership role prior to your mindfulness practice?
    a. If so, are there specific ways your leadership has changed that you attribute directly to your practice?

12. Are there any times when your mindfulness gets in the way of your leadership?

More Leadership & Mindfulness Questions

13. If you were to advise a junior leader on how to provide their organization with the best leadership possible, what would you say to them?

14. Is there anything you wish you did differently as a leader?

15. I'm interested in what mindful language looks like. What are the ways of talking that you favor?
    a. Terms that you favor?

b. Metaphors?
c. Stories?
d. Story themes?
e. Arguments that you pose?

16. Given your experience, is there anything else that you feel is important we talk about today?

Anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE, VERSION B - MINDFULNESS FIRST

Opening Questions

1. Please describe your role at your current employment.
    a. Would you consider that to be a leadership position?

2. How long have you been in a leadership position?

3. Who do you lead? And how many people do you lead?

4. In your opinion, what is the most important thing for you to have for "good" leadership?

Mindfulness Questions

5. Think about a specific time when you were aware of your mindfulness practice showing up in the way you were at work, specifically in regard to your communication or interactions.
    a. Can you set the scene for me?
    b. Can you locate the mindfulness in that interaction? Where did it show up for you?

6. What does mindfulness mean to you?

7. If you could wave a magic wand and forever be perfectly mindful, what would this look like in terms of your leadership?

8. Did you ever hold a leadership role prior to your mindfulness practice?
    a. If so, are there specific ways your leadership has changed that you attribute directly to your practice?

9. Are there any times when your mindfulness gets in the way of your leadership?

Paradox Questions

10. An important topic in today's leadership research is how leaders manage opposing tensions in their workplace. Can you tell me about a specific time at work when you felt pushed and pulled between two or more goals that competed with one another?
    a. Can you name the tensions or goals pulling you in different directions?
    b. Can you break this down into parts/sequence (e.g., when it first started)?
    c. How did you work through the situation?

    d. Did you have any conversations around this topic? What did you say? What can you recollect from that?

11. This is a word association question. In any order, please provide me with 5 - 8 words that reflect how the situation made you feel.
    a. You have identified (list the words they provided). Did mindfulness have an impact on your ability to manage these emotions?
    b. Can you explain?

12. (If they talk about the pause…)
    a. What does the pause provide/allow you?

13. If you were to instruct a friend — who knows *nothing about mindfulness* — on how to deal with opposing goals or tensions that arise in *their* organization, walk me through what you might say to them.

More Leadership & Mindfulness Questions

14. If you were to advise a junior leader on how to provide their organization with the best leadership possible, what would you say to them?

15. Is there anything you wish you did differently as a leader?

16. I'm interested in what mindful language looks like. What are the ways of talking that you favor?
    a. Terms that you favor?
    b. Metaphors?
    c. Stories?
    d. Story themes?
    e. Arguments that you pose?

17. Given your experience, is there anything else that you feel is important we talk about today?

Anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX C

FIVE FACET MINDFULNESS QUESTIONNAIRE (FFMQ)

1 - never or very rarely true
2 - rarely true
3 - sometimes true
4 - often true
5 - very often or always true

1. When I'm walking, I deliberately notice the sensations of my body moving.
2. I'm good at finding words to describe my feelings.
3. I criticize myself for having irrational or inappropriate emotions. (reverse)
4. I perceive my feelings and emotions without having to react to them.
5. When I do things, my mind wanders off and I'm easily distracted. (reverse)
6. When I take a shower or bath, I stay alert to the sensations of water on my body.
7. I can easily put my beliefs, opinions, and expectations into words.
8. I don't pay attention to what I'm doing because I'm daydreaming, worrying, or otherwise distracted. (reverse)
9. I watch my feelings without getting lost in them.
10. I tell myself I shouldn't be feeling the way I'm feeling. (reverse)
11. I notice how foods and drinks affect my thoughts, bodily sensations, and emotions.
12. It's hard for me to find the words to describe what I'm thinking. (reverse)
13. I am easily distracted. (reverse)
14. I believe some of my thoughts are abnormal or bad and I shouldn't think that way. (reverse)
15. I pay attention to sensations, such as the wind in my hair or sun on my face.
16. I have trouble thinking of the right words to express how I feel about things. (reverse)
17. I make judgments about whether my thoughts are good or bad. (reverse)
18. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present. (reverse)
19. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I "step back" and am aware of the thought or image without getting taken over by it.
20. I pay attention to sounds, such as clocks ticking, birds chirping, or cars passing.
21. In difficult situations, I can pause without immediately reacting.
22. When I have a sensation in my body, it's difficult for me to describe it because I can't find the right words. (reverse)
23. It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm Doing. (reverse)
24. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I feel calm soon after.
25. I tell myself that I shouldn't be thinking the way I'm thinking. (reverse)
26. I notice the smells and aromas of things.
27. Even when I'm feeling terribly upset, I can find a way to put it into words.
28. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them. (reverse)
29. When I have distressing thoughts or images I am able just to notice them without reacting.

30. I think some of my emotions are bad or inappropriate and I shouldn't feel Them. (reverse)
31. I notice visual elements in art or nature, such as colors, shapes, textures, or patterns of light and shadow.
32. My natural tendency is to put my experiences into words.
33. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I just notice them and let them go.
34. I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I'm doing. (reverse)
35. When I have distressing thoughts or images, I judge myself as good or bad, depending what the thought/image is about. (reverse)
36. I pay attention to how my emotions affect my thoughts and behavior.
37. I can usually describe how I feel at the moment in considerable detail.
38. I find myself doing things without paying attention. (reverse)
39. I disapprove of myself when I have irrational ideas. (reverse)

APPENDIX D

CODEBOOK

CODEBOOK			
Abbreviation	**Code**	**Description**	**Examples**
EmoAwa	Emotional awareness (mindset)	Instances of being aware of one's own, or others', emotional states in the face of contradictions. Most often, the emotion noticed is anxiety. This code is strongly linked with *EmoReg*	"Trying to just stay connected and **understand where I am emotionally.** [...] We're still in the very acute aftermath. We're starting to bring people together to say, "What are you experiencing? What has this meant for you personally? Just from an emotional standpoint, what are you feeling?" "Anger, guilt, sadness." We've heard it all. Mindfulness. It's been one of those things where the soul-searching as a professional has been enormous for me. It's been one where **I haven't come up with any answers, but what I know is I've named the struggle**." (12) "I **can't remember the specific conversations**, but I c**an certainly remember how I feel** when we talk about it. [laughs] I get anxious a little bit." (28) "First of all, I would probably **know that [emotions] were happening**." (11). Then, the second piece of advice would be just to **notice the first impression and how you're reacting and then try to stay in touch with that.** If something **triggers you when you're hearing one side or the other notice it**. Again, don't judge it and just be again curious about it. **Why is that triggering me, so I can be really clear on how I'm reacting to whatever's being said.** (12) I feel like when I'm faced from a leadership standpoint with actions or behaviors that I don't like to see, that I'm triggered by, I tend to, usually pretty easily, be able to step back and breath and just literally do many practices before I engage. I very often take a pause. I very often don't engage at the time, and maybe will say things like, "Let's take that together after this call. Let's talk a little bit or something." That's how mindfulness shows up for me. **I find that I'm less triggered by those emotional outbursts, but before I used to— I grew up in a big Irish family. We were always fighting about everything. Now I feel like I'm able to really step back and notice that like, "I want to get in and fight, too," and like, "Wait a minute, that's not going to help." [laughs]**
EmoReg	Emotional regulation (actions)	Instances of engaging in actions that regulate negative emotions, e.g., anxiety in the face of opposing tensions. This code is strongly linked with *EmoAwa* and *SelfCare*	"I didn't have a mindful practice. I think it would be really all-consuming for me. Mindfulness **helps me to ultimately see things differently** [...] I think this is true for a lot of people, especially for **people who run in a lot of emotions** or a lot of awareness around emotions or are highly sensitive. There's a sense of at times being swallowed by a situation. You know what I mean? It's all consuming like, "Oh my gosh. Is this thing never going to end and this is my life?" This catastrophic worst case scenario, which is like either they're getting lost in the story and, or then the rumination. I think mindfulness really helps me. In Koru, we talk about it all the time getting caught in a river. Mindfulness definitely gives me **the rope to pull myself back out of the river again and again and sit on the bank and observe and not get swept away**." (7) "The mindfulness can help me with the anxiety, with the stress part of it. Again, **taking away the power of letting those feelings**— For me, **anxiety is a story**. You start with this, "why did they want to meet with me? They must be unhappy with me. They must be thinking I'm not doing enough." It's building a story when reality is they asked to meet with me, that's all I know. By being mindful in thinking what are the facts, what are the truth, and **not letting that story build**, it **takes away the power of the stress**, and the anxiety, and it just leads to questioning or interested about what's going to happen." (3)

NonAttach	Non-attachment (mindset)	Instances that reflect the Buddhist concept of attachment or non-attachment, whereby participants "let go" of clutching to a particular outcome or desire.	"I think my mindfulness will be if we go in the direction that I don't think is the best way forward, how can I be supportive of it and **how can I let go of my expectation** of what I think the best outcome should be. Because at the end of the day, none of these things are— I keep telling myself **the business isn't going to break** based on these types of decisions." (16) "Probably, the easiest way to say how I'm navigating it is that I'm trying to be respectful of the person who really doesn't feel that that is something that they want to do but while still almost insisting that they do it and I'm **not expecting** them to do it. When they don't, **I'm going to let go of it.** [...] It's going to be up to me to be gracious and complimentary of what that person offers and just know that the person is not going to offer the piece that I— Probably, is just not going to happen. By the way, this is really helpful because I'm thinking about it now in a different way." (11) "I think the big thing is, at the end, **not holding too tightly to one particular outcome** for either of us. That's something my co-director and I always, at the end of the day, teach them to have respect for one another. One of us is going to give on it, and we'd just have to come to a decision about what makes the most sense. Then **not holding on to the outcome too tightly**." (16) "The one that came to mind immediately, was in mentoring my associate who's now a partner herself. When she wanted to advance to partnership, what that meant for me in terms of there's an economic shift that happens and a control thing that happens for me. The paradox was, here I had been training this young woman to be a very capable and productive young attorney and she got to a certain point and wanted to spread her wings, if you will. **I noticed a little bit of a clutching inside of me** like, "I don't think you're ready yet." That was a bit of a paradox it's like, wait a minute, isn't that what we're doing here? I had this little dialogue with myself about it." (2) "I **just don't hold on to things the same way I used to** hold on to them" (6) "With other people, I think the most you can do is say what you're going to say, bring the values that you bring and then **if that doesn't work, then just back off and lead by example.**" (25)
OkDiscomfort	Being okay with discomfort (mindset)	The ability to "sit with" discomfort, uncertainty, anxiety, "messiness" in the face of complex problems, without being emotionally or cognitively overburdened. A belief in the temporariness of discomfort.	"I'd say, first of all, that it's going to take a lot longer than you think it's going to take if you were going to do it right. I think I would say **be prepared to sit with the uncertainty** and the not knowing for a while. We all have a need to feel like we're providing structure, shape, and designing, and moving things forward, but when you're launching on something like this without a playbook, you've got to be willing to sit with the uncertainty long enough to feel like you've taken enough perspectives before you make a decision. **Making a decision too early, just to feel like you have structure, would have been the wrong thing.**" (24) "You just have to **be able to sit with anxiety.** That's why when you ask me what my thoughts were, anxiety was the first one because it's like— **We have to be able to sit with that, otherwise, it's our driver.**" (11) "Well, I have to say I've gotten **better at dealing with uncertainty.** In the earlier days, I just always wanted the solution right away." (13)

Pause	Taking a pause (actions)	Instances of inviting a pause toward decision-making when possible. The ability to take a pause is usually determined based on fact-checking the firmness of a deadline. This code also reflects instances of leaders re-framing the situation for employees so that employees are comfortable inviting a pause toward decision making as well. Also, the allowing or creating of "space" for silence, self-care, innovation, creativity, spontaneity, the development of a skill. The pause is linked with the codes *Creativity*, *SelfCare, Listen,* and *Decisions,* amongst others. *Note: the code *Pause* shows up in approaching the problem *and* navigating the problem.	"Our next thing is, "**Urgency is not a good solution**," [chuckles] because sometimes we get so caught up in the moment of like, "Oh, my God, we have to get this done," when really we're forgetting about our longer term views" (14) "What I often advise, and to myself as well, is to first **determine what the time frame is** for you to have a response. Meaning do you really need to make a decision right this minute? If you don't need to make a decision right this moment, then my recommendation is to sit with this for a little bit. Either literally, sit in meditation with it, or just percolate through your mind, body, and heart, for the next three or four hours or the next day, or whatever amount of time you are able to give to this decision or this situation. [...] Let's say I'm going to put it aside and think about it overnight. If I feel the same way tomorrow as I do right now, then that's probably a pretty good decision. If over the course of the next 12 to 24 hours I can feel a softening of the edges, I can feel a little bit of perspective, then usually that tells me that my first impulse may not have been the best choice and I'm really glad that I took some time to reflect" (2) "I also think using **the action and the word "pausing."** Could we pause for a moment and kind of see what we're noticing right now in our work? It's an invitation to bring some awareness versus reactivity because we all get so attached to what we think is the right way to go, and just inviting a pause can create a bit of space maybe that we're all attached to." (15) "I lead by my intuitive self, and I also will **sit with things** so I don't make rash decisions. **I take time.** If I am not comfortable with giving them any answer, I'll say get back to them." (17) "You can **insert some distance** between what's happening at the moment and being fused with the momentary experience. Take a step back, not disconnecting but getting a little bit of distance that you can see a wider range of options and pick among those options and see how that goes. That's what having a longer view does, it helps me too." (18) "Paradoxically, I would say "decisive" because I think if you **take the time** to really think about something and push yourself to courageously make a thoughtful mindful decision, you actually make more and make better decisions as opposed to doing a half-ass job or avoiding it or ignoring it." (5) "Everybody wants to feel like it's an emergency. [...] And since I am a physician, I've worked in emergency rooms. I have that to contrast with, like, "**No one is going to die [...] It's actually not an emergency.**" We joke about that with our consultant a lot when she's like really pushing us to go faster, be more aggressive. I was like, "This is not an emergency." [laughs] It may be my medical training background that allows... along with my mindfulness. Like when you've worked with like real emergencies, like someone is going to die, then it's a mindfulness decision, like this is not an emergency. [laughs]" (8) "it's really important to gather the information that you need, consult with wise people, consult with people who know about what it is you're trying to learn or do, whatever situation you're trying to solve. Then take a breath and remember **you have time to figure it out**. If you're feeling really pressured to really investigate, if that's where that pressure is coming from and are there truly external constraints that make it as urgent as it feels or is it internally driven either by you or your colleagues, and it really isn't as urgent, and maybe by taking some time, taking some deep breaths, you can reduce that sense of pressure and I think you'll make a better decision then." (8) "But really for four years of the launch, I didn't have time for that. Every spare moment was about how to grow this thing. Yet, I can look back

			and see that in some cases I missed opportunities because I didn't have that balance right of giving myself **still time to let the mind wander to see what influences might suggest**." (9) "Patience allows us to **slow it down, zoom out, stop forcing**, see why are we getting push-pull in the first place. In taking that step to zoom out, you can **elevate yourself to that 30,000-foot view**. It's key to navigating any [problem]." (1) "I would say that I have found it useful to try to **not get caught in the trenches of the contradiction**, but to try to **step back** and **see the bigger view** for both of whatever the positions are that are going on, and trying to see if there might be some out-of-the-box ways of viewing it that can accommodate both, that you can't see when you're in the midst of the trench." (18) "You have to take care of the well-being of the people who you manage. You have to be able to give them **space and time** for self-care at the workplace [...] You have to leave **space for innovation** and time to **take your foot off the gas**, so they can allow for new ideas depending on their role [...] Also, the space for innovation would mean quite often where task-oriented businesses and you're operating in the left brain, and you're just continually filling in the blanks like what you're doing right now taking notes and talking to me. Then the right brain, can notice relationships between things or is what can stimulate new ideas." (28)

SelfCare	Self-care (actions)	The notion that self-care is productive in problem-solving, decision making, and overall efficacy at work. Self-care often comes *before* attempting to solve the problem. This code is strongly linked with *EmoReg*	“Being able to notice when I'm— I'm not somebody who's anxious. I'm not an anxious person by nature at all. Anxiety is like a new phenomenon for me. Yes, I know. That's kind of the work I do with my therapist and i**t's also self-care. Things like exercise are really important and trying to manage sleep and all those things**. Trying to just stay connected and understand where I am emotionally.” (12) "I was practicing mindfulness before I realized that that’s what I was doing. I’ve always meditated, I’ve always prayed, and I’ve always found quiet time for myself throughout the course of dealing with crazy days that I’ve had in all of my leadership life. I would say even as a staff nurse in a busy emergency department or trauma center, I knew when it was time for me to just go take five minutes. I didn’t call it mindfulness then but I knew that I needed to just have **a little bit of reset in order for me to be more effective.**" (10) "I think that one of the things that I get out of it is that the **self-care allows me to be able to carry those burdens**." (13)
Creativity	Practicing creativity (actions)	Actions associated with producing or increasing creativity in problem-solving.	"I think that knowing that those things happen all the time, the ability to be mindful and hop into myself a little deeper allows me to bring some of that understanding to opposing sides. I am very open to listening to others, I like **collecting ideas** and **listening for more creative ways out**. I know that when I was not practicing mindfulness, I didn't have the capacity to do that. I would see a solution to the plan and I would try to enact the solution." (13) "Hopefully, if the culture of the company is what it is to **think creatively with others.** Not just you and me, but like, "Let's think creatively with others. Let's think about people that are currently doing the job and identify a couple players from there." Maybe putting together a small team that's not too big, not unwieldy, but the key priority is to really outline what are the issues, **what's the problem, what are the constraints, and what are the possible solutions?**" (37)
Curiosity	Curiosity (mindset)	The ability to bring curiosity, without judgment, to the problem. This code is linked with the code S*uspend*	"It keeps me curious. I think **mindfulness allows for curiosity**." (28) "I think mindful language comes from **a place of being curious**, and inquiry." (5) "Anxiety only requires an interest as well. As long as I don't act on the anxiety, **it only requires to be interested** in it, right?" (11) "I think you have to really honestly listen, without that listening so you can refute the falsehood, you know what I mean? You have to honestly **listen to everybody's perspective with true curiosity and willingness**. I don't think that's easy to do. I think you can tell people they should do that, but that's a skill that is cultivated. If this just doesn't come naturally in humans. I think it takes a lot of practice and I guess a lot of strong leadership if you're in a bigger business where there's a lot of infighting, I suppose." (8) "I would start and have them be very thoughtful about understanding both sides. Trying to adopt some of the principles of mindfulness. **Curiosity without judgment** and really listening more from a heart-based listening than a head-based listening." (12) "I might advise them to think about the value as a leader of not having to be all-knowing with solutions. I might advise them to think about this as an incredibly healthy experience they're in the midst of, and that they have the **opportunity to open up their curiosity about those opposing tensions** and bring the struggle to their staff as a joint exercise in sharing

			possible solutions to these goal tensions." (15) "Well, I think one thing that has always felt freeing to me as a leader and as a follower of directors I've worked for, leaders I've worked with, is the **invitation to bring curiosity to the workplace** in every meeting. Curiosity is one piece of [mindful] language." (15)
Suspend	Suspending judgment or labels (mindset)	The act of intentionally suspending judgment or labels toward a person or problem. This code is linked with *Curiosity*	"They're starting to look at okay, what do you see? Not just looking at things and calling on things, [but] what would a tree be if it didn't have the label "tree"? We walked by all these various types of basil in little jars and bees and the butterflies. I said, "If you had no labels, what is it? What is that?" **Walking without labels, seeing things, the space between things,** looking for shapes, looking for movement, looking for stillness and then we moved to sound, listening to sounds. Again, you can label that first, but then okay, what does that wind actually sound like? Then moving from that to noticing the aromas in the area even the taste in your mouth, noticing the way the body moves through space and time." (28) "Listening and **suspending the focus on narrower goals to be able to see what underlying inside or energy the person is bringing to the conversation** so that I can be able to support and maximize that." (9) "That you're not just trying to fit the whole world into your version of reality. You've got to **find time to suspend that to let influences come in from other places**, from unforeseen places and benefit from that. I feel sometimes the balance of that is not right and I haven't figured that out yet. Like right now, I'm going more into a period where I can focus on listening to podcasts, wandering through town, watching a new TV show that's getting a lot of attention in the culture to see what things connect by not looking to fit everything in." (9)

BothAnd	Both/and perspective (mindset)	Assumptions that reflect both/and thinking, as discussed in Putnam et al. (2016) This code is linked with *MoreThan*	"**I made sure that I really understood the changes that were coming financially** and what we needed to do to prepare ourselves for the future. **At the same time, I had to keep reminding people that we were in the present** every single day and this is the reality of today's world. What I was able to do was model out where we were headed, why in the long run these changes were important." (10) "My first response— The first thing that came to mind was it wouldn't look any different because I'm practicing at whatever level is available to me right now. **That's just perfect, but of course, [laughs] there's lots of room for improvement.** I don't know what it would look like when I improve. I hope I improve. More kindness, more connectedness, less triggeredness, I guess." (11) "My vision is to give nurses a voice in a different way. Let's develop a climate where your professionals with a practice. For some, that might have been too much too soon. It could be that the Union has felt and I've heard this, a little less relevant when we stood up Nursing Professional Governance. **They can coexist.** There's so many angles and perspectives." (12) "Knowing that we can't do that in a reactive way all of the time for everyone, but there have to be principles in place and also support people, **it's both. You want to act on principle *and* also support people.** Hopefully, those aren't conflicting but sometimes they are." (18) "I would say that I have found it useful to try to not get caught in the trenches of the contradiction, but to try to step back and see the bigger view for both of whatever the positions are that are going on, and **trying to see if there might be some out-of-the-box ways of viewing it that can accommodate both,** that you can't see when you're in the midst of the trench. [You think] you have to take a side, you have to take a side. If you can allow yourself to not have to pick a side and step back and see what's possible, **if you're allowed not to pick a side, you may see opportunities that are definite otherwise.**" (18) "I think what it has led to, my awareness and certainly at this stage of my life, is that things aren't clean, that stuff's messy. Where I am at my stage of life at 61, I think, "Okay, how long do I want to step fully into the circle?" **Just holding them both/and,** it's okay. It's okay to have that messiness and not know." (15)

MoreThan	More/than perspective (mindset)	Assumptions or actions that reflect more/than thinking or potential behaviors—as discussed in Putnam et al. (2016)—in response to decision making. This code is linked with *Solution*	"I would say that prior to really mindfully practicing mindfulness, I was not as good at remaining calm and processing through challenging situations, especially challenging situations. Again, like it was I have a solution, let's say I have the solution and I wasn't always this patient but now, I approach those situations very calmly. I found that that is one of the most important things that I can do in any situation. Then with the idea that there is a solution, **there's absolutely a solution and that if we can all get our brains working together that we'll find that solution. It will be one that we all are happy with it.** There's no need for a compromise, like we can come up with that third option that we haven't thought of. **You're on A, you're on F but there is a third option here where we can come up with something that's really creative.**" (13) "I wouldn't go so far as to say that every conflict like that has an easy solution but so **much of the time the opportunity for something that you haven't actually exploited or thought of lies in seeing the bigger environment** around where that conflict is meeting. It could be looking at how the other departments are affected and what relationships could benefit or suffer. Really, I never say think bigger this way or that way but push yourself to think about the environment around this conflict, could give an opportunity somewhere in there that could if not resolve that tension render the tension not as either debilitating or even as relevant. [...] "I don't know if I can give you really the tangible example but where, **from that tension or conflict, even a new market or product is seen for the first time.**" (9) "It's benefited us as much as it can, so we need to do two things. On the business development side, we need to go ahead, all right, capitalize on how far the monetization of those things could take us. Let them have their media company economic model but transfer that community building into a different model rather than use it within the media model [...] Essentially, I've taken that into the philanthropic model where the benefit and exchange isn't about selling subscribers, it's about bringing the same kind of benefits into social innovation in the urban neighborhoods where a lot of foundations are really much more interested." (9) Sophia: "What was the result of that? Did you have people who end up take and start paying again, once they got up back on their feet?" Meredith: "Exactly, and **they were so thankful, they brought other people.**" (17) "There's this push and pull between productivity and calmness and not a lot of people see calmness, not a lot of people see mindfulness and thoughtfulness in their roles at ASU. I think that's one thing that we're here to teach people. **You can be both, and in fact you're more productive when you are peaceful and thoughtful**. You actually **end up getting more accomplished** if you think about what you're doing and you preach and you're mindful while you're doing it. It's not just this idea of getting things done and pushing things through this idea of being, of quality, quantity. In a larger environment, **it's all about productivity, and it is here too at Organization X, but it's also about promoting a sense of peace.**" (25)

Listen	Active empathic listening (actions)	This is deep listening, that is often whole-hearted and whole-bodied in nature This code is strongly linked with *Perspectives*	"One of the things that I was applying, [...] for me and my own leadership, was my perceptions of my **listening ability.** I always perceived that I was a good listener. Now, that I have a teenage daughter, I am learning more and more every day that I am still working on this every day of my life. One of the things of that mindfulness practice really helped me to do was to be able to think to myself, when I'm in a situation where I'm supposed to be actively listening and my mind is wondering or thinking about other things, or, in many cases, just trying to think about the perfect response before the question was even finished. It really helped me to improve the perception of others that I was **more engaged in listening** as well as it really did help me to be a much **more active listener.**" (10) "Curiosity without judgment, and r**eally listening more from a heart-based listening than a head-based listening.** Where you're tending to want to formulate your response and not really listen. **Be very thoughtful in listening sessions that help you understand both sides**. Both the opposition, or opposing frames of mind, and why they feel that way. **Not just *what* they're feeling, but *why*.** That would be the first thing I would say." (12) "One of the things I like to use as a framing sound bite is the idea of **"gracious space."** What that means is really **coming into an encounter and adopting all of the principles of mindfulness**. **Listening intently,** not judging, being very aware of your own place in space. Connecting with your breath and being open to others. There's this **openness to others ideas and thoughts** and so that whole imagery of gracious space is a powerful one." (12) "I think in my conversations with people, **I try to listen and I try to pay attention to their signals** as well knowing what their source responses are, knowing how they're holding themselves. I think that's an important skill in mindfulness." (25)
Perspectives	Seeking diverse perspectives (actions)	The intentional inclusion of diverse perspectives, often through deep listening and empathic perspective-taking. Perspective-taking is often structured, e.g., through regular meetings with diverse voices This code is strongly linked with *Listen*	"Just two weeks ago **I set up an advisory board, some business people, some yoga teachers, a woman that basically- a lawyer.**" (17) "Well, **I try to listen to people who obviously are one side of that—** I'm on the organic growth, whereas many people, advisers I have, often want me to grow because they see the value of what I teach and what I bring and they want me to be successful and viable and a good company. I listen to people. I look at various ideas. I've actually hired a few marketing people which tends not to have my voice in it as an entrepreneur and a leader teaching my own product. I have to look at integrity. Yes, that would be the biggest challenge, but **I think we address it as I listen, I try to be flexible, I try to adopt new tactics** but I certainly can feel resistance." (28) "In order to do that is, again, to remember what it is you're trying to do and be open-minded. There is not clearly a learned over and over again as a human being, as you go through life that **there is well more than one way to do things. There's not one way and one right way only, there are multiple different ways and people see things different ways**. So, what may be totally right to me is not necessarily right to somebody else, so be open-minded. Again, there's a goal that you're trying to get to, and there's a whole bunch of different ways to get there. So, try help guide people in that direction, but **be open-minded to different ways of potentially getting there**. Does that make sense?" (6)

WiseCounsel	Seeking wise counsel (actions)	Actions and interactions that involve seeking wise counsel or mentorship from respected peers or mentors This code is linked with *Perspectives*	"First of all, we had to get into high gear incident command. I was like an animal in terms of trying to get the right resources. **We reached out to people who had been through it, so I could have the wisdom of experience** to guide what we did here because my primary focus was patients will be safe. That was just one of these things that has just— It has changed this organization forever. We don't even know the impact right now, right?" (12) "Yes, thank you. I have to say, this wasn't like, "Oh, we thought all this up." **We have had some amazing advisers, foundations, and business leaders, and VC people**, like people that have this **vast experience**, but, also, really embrace mindfulness and connection. They've really helped us get this structure so that we could have a container for all of us to do this incredibly hard and yet incredibly powerful work." (14) "You need to keep the conversation going. Follow what you know to be the right direction but **seek wise counsel.** Stay in your integrity. Remain present to opportunities." That's probably it." (28) “The leadership role for me was to **go and find help,** to assist me in some of the emotional aspects. **I'm always looking for mentors**. I had three main mentors that were— **one was a yoga mentor, one was a business mentor and one was a spiritual mentor,** and those three mentors that we go to on a pretty regular basis and say, "I'm having a really hard time and so what would you do business-wise or spiritually? How should I take this? Or what do I need to learn here?" That kind of thing.” (17) “When there's problems that come up, as a leader, I will **go to people that I feel have experience** in the issue that I'm dealing with, and I will bring that in. **I'll take a lot of those and then sit with it, and then make a decision**.” (17)
Assumptions	Questioning assumptions (mindset)	Questioning assumptions of self or others in order to dig deeper. Often aligned with "fact checking.' E.g., What are the facts? And, is any of this a story you are creating? This code is linked with *Questions* and *FactCheck*	"A **detachment from your own sense of what's right or wrong or how something should be**. The ability to **let go of your own viewpoint as it being the right way.** The ability to let go of your own agenda." (21) “I was thinking they were coming from a bad place, and not being happy with my work. Then I thought about it that night. I really tried to do what I explained earlier. Why are they coming from here? What are the reasons why they could possibly want to meet with me? It might be that they might not be happy with all the outcomes, but it could be that they are happy with the outcomes and want to know more about what I'm doing. **The time gave me an opportunity to think about the different reasons why.** I always go back to- and I think this is because my life changed when I lost my son- I always go back to "Is this the worst thing that could happen?" No, it's not. Would I be able to get through this if they aren't happy? Absolutely.” (3) “**I had created this expectation that is was going to be more confrontational** and so I was like, "Err." Then I got there and I'm like, "Okay, God you're ready." **Then I'm like, "Wait a minute. Is this really necessary right now? Really?"** (2) "One thing that we did shift is [...] we got really clear about, like looking at our quarterly goals and then there were just way too many of them. They all seemed really important and so we laid out a map for the year and spread the goals all out through the year and put them in rank order of what's most important for each quarter. Then as each quarter progresses, it's just some changes. Some things that seem like they're going to be really important in this quarter turned out not be that important or is it just too hard to get done, they got moved into the next quarter. Some of them are just, with time realized, "no we don't even need to do that at all. Take it off." I think it was really important to spread out the timeframe really. There's these 20 things. They don't need to all get done this quarter. Let's spread them out over the next four quarters. **Let’s prioritize them, what are the really most important?**

			and then let's revisit it every quarter because it’s going to change." (8)
Questions	Asking questions of stakeholders (actions)	Asking questions of stakeholders, or self, to get to the facts. This code is linked with *Assumptions* and *FactCheck*	"**I try to ask a lot of questions**. I like to engage people in their thinking because in my old self, I say 10 plus years ago, I thought that my job as a leader was to solve everyone's problem. Today, in my new enlightened self and much older that doesn't want to work as hard, my job really becomes helping people to see that they have the answers within them or the answers are in front of them. My job is to help get that out. **I always start by checking in with people**." (10) "I would **ask them a series of questions.** I would probably say, "What do you need in order to support yourself to stay curious about what's happening in all the different dimensions of this dilemma?" **I would ask them to examine what the factors are that support their own position** and to see- to unpack those and then, to examine which factors come from wisdom and which factors come from compassion and which factors don't come from either of those directions and maybe come from fear or greed or desire or— I might use some more flattering word than greed, e.g. single bottom line. I would ask them to reflect on the other humans involved in the dilemma and what they think of those people." (11)

FactCheck	Fact checking (actions)	Determining the facts, and discerning facts from false beliefs, or false dichotomies. Often aligned with questioning assumptions, question asking, and seeking diverse perspectives. This code is linked with *Assumptions* and *Questions*	"Well, I think I would suggest that they talk through the issues with either me or somebody else in the firm and make sure they're considering everyone's perspective on a particular issue and how it could impact not only him or her the person who's got the issue but the other people in the firm and the firm as a whole. There are always a lot of competing interests in life whether you're in a law firm or a banker or somewhere else. I think that would be my primary advice not to rush to a quick decision about how to react to something, **try and gather all necessary information** and just consider all the perspective's out there." (26) "I just did it yesterday. I think I would talk through the situation to hear, to make sure I understand, let them share with me and **listen as best I can to gather the facts and understand where their conflict lies.** Is it something that can be solved easily? Is it more like emotion, feeling conflict, and from there, then go back to what their values are, and what they believe is most important." (3) "All right. **I think the very first thing that I would want to ask is, "Can you show me the evidence that is requiring these two things?"** Because you've gotten this from someone else. It sounds like I wouldn't actually **fully understand all the details**. I would actually just **ask for more understanding** around what is actually happening," (37) "As part of that process, it's really important to **identify all of the different constituents or stakeholders that are involved and ask them to bring as much fact as they can** because **often, we operate from our perspective and what our belief system is.** There's nothing inherently wrong with that but **it's really helpful as a leader if you can also have data to add to that decision-making process.** Then to facilitate the conversation, understanding that it will probably be a series of many conversations and that everyone's point of view is valid." (40)
Reframing	Reframing (actions)	Reframing the process of decision making (e.g., taking the pause), or the outcome of decision making	"**I always remind people to be open to the learning that occurs in those really difficult times.** If you look at huge **challenges as opportunities** to learn, I think about that in learning about yourself, learning about your communication, learning about your organization, learning about your peers, maybe it's your family, your spouse, whatever. **If you look at those as learning opportunities, they don't seem as insurmountable as a problem that you're trying to solve.** It's like saying the difference— like my partner is great about this. Every time I say, "Well, the problem is—" He's like, "Hmm, no problems. Opportunities, challenges. Let's talk about it in those terms." It's so true **when you reframe your thinking to talk about challenges or opportunities versus the problem that you have to solve, you think about it in a very different way.**" (10) "**I might advise them to think about the value as a leader of not having to be all knowing with solutions.** I might advise them to think about this as an incredibly healthy experience they're in the midst of, and that they have the opportunity to open up their curiosity about those opposing tensions and bring the struggle to their staff as a joint exercise in sharing possible solutions to these goal tensions." (15) "So, first, making that inner piece of the decent or the paradox of the decision, and then helping my staff process it. **Helping them understand that well we trust our leaders here, it's okay if we don't always know why they make a decision.**" (38) "I never rely one income stream. We're always looking for different mechanisms and ways, we're never relying on one place, because that would crumble us. We can't have that model. **My job is to get everyone on that same page of what this model looks like**, and to help them to allocate their time and resources in ways that I think would be most productive to the long term vision." (4) "I've really trained myself in purposely [thinking] **"challenge over problem."** We look at things as: "challenges can be overcome, problems

			are issues." People get like hyper triggered by, you know, things that they see as a "problem." (16)
Values	Values-based decision criteria (mindset)	A focus on core values as a guiding organizing principle in the face of complex problems.	"The next thing I would say is to provide really clear direction from a vision-mission standpoint. I think some of those things get developed as a team, but there **needs to be real clarity from an organizational standpoint** about what we're all trying to get to, and an agreement that that's the goal. I think clarity as far as **direction, and mission rules**." (14) "Our next thing is urgency is not a good solution, [chuckles] because sometimes we get so caught up in the moment of like, "O, my God, we have to get this done," when really we're forgetting about our **longer term views**" (14) "I might advise them to think about the value as a leader of not having to be all knowing with solutions. I might advise them to think about this as an incredibly healthy experience they're in the midst of, and that they have the opportunity to open up their curiosity about those opposing tensions and bring the struggle to their staff as a joint exercise in sharing possible solutions to these goal tensions. I might encourage that person to ground their process and **the values they hold for that organization**, to be very transparent about these are my values for our organization at this moment in time, here's the goal tension, and to be transparent and willing to be vulnerable." (15) "Yes, but it's a particular kind of pause. It's a pause that in some ways I will say to myself, "**All right, what are my values? What are the other person's needs and values from my perspective as best as I understand?** What's our long-term goal together? Do we have one and how can we then move forward to address it?" (18) "In terms of making the decision, I wrestled with it as the leader in my company. I wrestled with it a lot. I spent a lot of time reading and trying to learn a little bit more about it but ultimately really trusted my own gut, my own intuition that even though it was a challenging decision and it would put us a bit in conflict with our marketing, that **it was the right thing to do** and that ultimately I didn't want us to be part of the problem. I wanted to be part of the solution. Even if in the short run it hurt our income or our client base." (23) "I think ultimately **we got to a decision based on going back to our ultimate objective**, which is we want this to be inclusive. We want everybody to have a space to play in this, which then helped us eliminate those options that borrow specific to small groups." (24) "There's always that **middle road between quality and quantity**, I'd

			have to say. **For me, quality is so much more important**." (28) "I think that we kind of got a little bit into— Well, sounds frenetic for us, but probably other companies would feel just frenetic bit like trying to do too many things at once and then we have learned that **we have to prioritize**. Like what is really going to be **the most valuable thing we could do right now and do that, instead of trying to do everything** at once and feeling like it's an emergency. We kind of adopted this phrase, when we realize you're doing that. There's like, okay, this is a mindfulness organization, there are no emergencies." (8) "I might encourage that person to **ground their process and the values they hold for that organization**, to be very transparent about these are my values for our organization at this moment in time, here's the goal tension, and to be transparent and willing to be vulnerable." (15)

Decisions	Decision-making practices and processes (mindsets & actions)	Responses that deal with decision making, including processes, practices values, questions to ask, and the leaders' role. Often the focus on "better" decision making. *Note: this code is linked with numerous codes from approaching the and solving the problem.	"I think that most of the time leaders have the ability to manage what they are supposed to be taking care of. Most of them have that ability. What they don't have the ability to do is self-reflect and **go back and look at, was that really a good decision?** The only way that you get there is to be able to step out of your to-do list [...] **When I'm not taking care of myself and I'm the empty cup, my decisions are not good,** and I'm not an effective leader. I have that time to just re-center. You can't pour from an empty cup, that's what I'd tell them." (13) "Then, I think a lot of what I kept hearing from my team [after I started practicing mindfulness] was just, that **there was a lot of clarity in the way that we made decisions,** and in the way that we move through the path that we're on at that time in the organization. We had record results in the organization, and it was noticeable not just to our team, but to all the other teams." (14) "I lead my intuitive self and I also will sit with things so **I don't make rash decisions.** I take time. If I am not comfortable with giving them any answer, I'll say get back to them." (17) "I try to talk about longer term goals and values, yes. Obviously, you have to deal with what's in front of you at the moment, but **keeping the bigger picture, I think we make better decisions.** In fact, I was just looking at some data yesterday about the study that came out, about pulling back a little and then **mindfulness, we would call it centering, actually leads to better decision-making** [...] You can insert some distance between what's happening at the moment and being fused with the momentary experience. Take a step back, not disconnecting but getting a little bit of distance that you can see a wider range of options and pick among those options and see how that goes. That's what having a longer view does, it helps me too." (18) "I usually recommend that we pause and that we don't have to respond immediately and that often **the first reactive decision that we make is not always the best one**. Sometimes there's a gut thing that happens, which could be really good, but sometimes it's sort of this interplay between the gut and the head, and it's just going like, "Am I just reacting because I'm on hyper alert and I'm in this 24/7 connectivity mode and so I think I have to react in the same speed with which the message was transmitted to me?" (2) "In terms of making the decision, I wrestled with it as the leader in my company. **I wrestled with it a lot.** I spent a lot of time reading and trying to learn a little bit more about it but ultimately really trusted my own gut, my own intuition that even though **it was a challenging decision and it would put us a bit in conflict with our marketing, but it was the right thing to do** and that ultimately **I didn't want us to be part of the problem. I wanted to be part of the solution.** Even if in the short run it hurt our income or our client base." (23) "I'd say, first of all, that **it's going to take a lot longer than you think it's going to take if you were going to do it right.** I think I would say be prepared to sit with the uncertainty and the not knowing for a while. We all have a need to feel like we're providing structure, shape, and designing, and moving things forward, but when you're launching on something like this without a playbook, **you've got to be willing to sit with the uncertainty long enough to feel like you've taken enough perspectives before you make a decision**. Making a decision too early just to feel like you have structure would have been the wrong thing." (24) "I suppose it's not the easiest thing to be a leader, it's one of the hardest things to make decisions all day everyday and **taking care of yourself is of the utmost importance, decision fatigue is a real effect.**" (25) "There's definitely **times where I wish I would have approached**

			decision-making differently, meaning at times got more people involved in the decisions so that you would get support and backing right from the get-go, versus have to try and get people to buy into it. At other times, I've learned the opposite, depending on the situation, where I wish I would have just ran with this first because I think if we would have gotten steps A, B, and C done, then everyone would've been jumping in by the time we got to D. But by starting and trying to get everyone to buy into A first, it took an extra 10 months or year to get to D. So, both of those things, and again, I'm certainly not right all the time, but don't have a perfect way of saying, "Go this road, or this road," it's just feeling it out but having a much better sense of that because of experience. So that but plenty, plenty, plenty of things that I've done, I would have done differently." (6) "One thing I really noticed is that when pressed to act, to make a decision, to move really quickly, I found that when I did that, the stress for our whole team went up, I don't think our decisions were as good and when we noticed that pattern, we started consciously reminding ourselves, let's slow down, take a deep breath. Let's not decide this right this minute. I think for a couple times where we did kind of make decisions, and then later kind of feeling like that was too pressured. That made the whole team stressed. It wasn't the best decision. We need to integrate the information and then give it time to see if that really is the best next step. I think what I learned to do, maybe that wasn't my first thing. I think I got a little caught up in the consultants recommendations and then I learned that that was not helpful for our team and that we needed to s**low down, take a step back. Then it felt like we were making better decisions and we got on track very quickly after that.**" (8)

APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL FORM

EXEMPTION GRANTED

Sarah Tracy

Human Communication, Hugh Downs School of

480/965-7709

Sarah.Tracy@asu.edu

Dear Sarah Tracy:

On 4/11/2018 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Exploring Mindfulness Practice on Leaders' Sensemaking and Organizing Interactions
Investigator:	Sarah Tracy
IRB ID:	STUDY00008113
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None

Documents Reviewed:	• Interview Consent - Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • Cognitive Affective Mindfulness Scale, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB Protocol - Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • In Person Interview Guide - Mindfulness & Organizational Leadership.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Recruitment Script - Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership (1).pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • Kentucky Inventory Mindfulness Skills, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • Survey Consent - Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership (1).pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 4/11/2018.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Sophia Town

APPENDIX F

ONLINE SURVEY CONSENT FORM

Title of research study:
Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership

Investigators:
Sophia Town, M.A.
Dr. Sarah Tracy

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
The research team invites you to take part in a research study because you are at least 18 years of age, and you are able give your consent to participating in scholarly research.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this communication research is to gain a better understanding of the way, if at all, mindfulness practice influences leadership.

How long will the research last?
This online interview will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

How many people will be studied?
The research team expects about 30 people will participate in the study**.**

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?
You will complete a brief online survey. The research team will assign you a pseudonym so that you will remain confidential.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You may leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

Will being in this study help me in any way?
The research team cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include: the personal satisfaction of contributing to academic social research, and once the research findings are released to you (upon request), learning more about yourself.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Your interview data and this survey data will be linked via a master list with your full name and pseudonym. The master list containing your full name and pseudonyms will remain on the researcher's personal, passcode protected iCloud folder. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations or publications but your name will not be known. The research data will remain stored indefinitely, in a passcode-protected file, to be used in later research.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact Sophia Town at sophiatown@asu.edu, or Dr. Sarah Tracy at sarah.tracy@asu.edu.
This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may contact them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

By completing this online interview you are consenting to participate in this research study.
Please click "next" to proceed.

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Title of research study:
Mindfulness and Organizational Leadership

Investigators:
Sophia Town, M.A.
Dr. Sarah Tracy

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?
The research team invites you to take part in a research study because you are at least 18 years of age, and you are able give your consent to participating in scholarly research.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this communication research is to gain a better understanding of the way, if at all, mindfulness practice influences leadership.

How long will the research last?
This interview will take no more than 60 minutes to complete.

How many people will be studied?
The research team expects about 30 individuals will participate in the study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?
The researcher would like to audio record the interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let the researcher know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let the researcher know. Following the interview (if recorded), the researcher will upload the audio recording to a specific folder on the researcher's iCloud account.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?
You may leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you.

Will being in this study help me in any way?
The research team cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include: the personal satisfaction of contributing to academic social research, and once the research findings are released to you (upon request), learning more about yourself.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Your responses will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in all published findings. If applicable, the researcher will change any identifying information, such as your place of work or recreation.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations or publications but your name will not be used. The research data will remain stored indefinitely, in a passcode-protected file, to be used in later research.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, please contact Sophia Town at sophiatown@asu.edu, or Dr. Sarah Tracy at sarah.tracy@asu.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Social Behavioral IRB. You may contact them at (480) 965-6788 or by email at research.integrity@asu.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Please let the researcher know if you wish to be part of the study.

APPENDIX H

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Hello,

My name is Sophia Town, and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Human Communication at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore the ways, if at all, mindfulness practice influences leadership.

I am reaching out to you today because 1) you hold a leadership role in an organization, and 2) you were referred to this study by an individual who believes you engage in regular mindfulness practice (meditation, yoga, retreats, courses, etc.). With your permission, I would like to meet with you for an interview (either in-person or via Skype). Following the interview you will be invited to participate in a brief online survey.

Is this something you would be interested in?

In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. Participation in this study is voluntary. To participate in this study, or if you have any questions concerning the research study, please email me back at sophiatown@asu.edu or call me at 425-246-4726.

Thank you,

Sophia Town, M.A.
The Hugh Downs School of Human Communication
Arizona State University